



THE INDEPENDENT

ON SATURDAY

Saturday 17 January 1998

70p No 3,510

**INSIDE
YOUR FIVE
SECTION
PAPER**

YOUR MONEY



TIME OFF



EYE



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Special art
issue**

THE MAGAZINE

The fight for green Britain



United in opposition: Everyone from a mayor to local activists support direct action to stop 113 homes being built on this site next to the East Sussex town of Peacehaven. Pictured left to right are: Roy Goodall, Mayor of Teiscombe; 'Dom' and 'Lizzy', local environmental campaigners; Mark Mansbridge, a community worker; John Livings, chair of Peacehaven Residents' Association; and Alan Byng, deputy mayor of Peacehaven

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DOUBLE TOKENS
PAGE 15:
INDEPENDENT AND
INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY TOKEN
COLLECT

TODAY'S NEWS

Rapist forces legal change

A rapist whose actions led to Government promises to change the law after he humiliated his victims in court was told he would have to serve 21 years in jail for a series of attacks. Milton Brown, 44, caused outrage last year when he forced a widow and a graduate he had attacked at knife-point to relive their torment in the witness box in intimate detail. **Page 3**

Pig run ends

The great Malmesbury pig hunt finally ended yesterday when the remaining Ginger Tamworth escapee was captured by police and RSPCA inspectors. **Page 17**

Head for sums

Schoolchildren under the age of seven or eight should be expected to do most mathematical calculations in their heads, rather than using pencil and paper, according to a report from the Government's Numeracy Task Force, to be published next week. **Page 3**

Eco-warriors and roads protesters are joining the fight against housebuilding in the countryside, threatening occupations and tunnels on building sites. Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's decision not to stop massive housing development in Hertfordshire's green belt has not helped, says Environment Correspondent Nicholas Schoon.

Direct-action protesters say the time has come to shift from trying to stop roads - where they have a propaganda success - to blocking new houses on greenfield sites.

Local residents trying to save the green fields in their back yards show every sign of welcoming them. And more traditional campaigning groups, like Friends of the Earth, have no objections.

Supporters of Earth First! are expected to attend a London conference today of community groups fighting housing plans, organised by FoE and the road protest group Alarm UK. The House Builders Federation is drawing up plans to defend its central London office from an invasion by Swampy-style activists.

The stakes were raised yesterday when John Prescott said he would not stand in the way of plans to build about 10,000 new homes on farmland west of Stevenage. At 800 hectares, it will be one of the biggest single losses of green belt land since the designation was invented 60 years ago to stop cities sprawling into one another.

"It's outrageous," said FoE. The Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) said it had not seen such bad decisions since Nicholas Ridley was a Tory environment secretary in the Eighties.

Mr Prescott, Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions had until today to decide whether to seek to change Hertfordshire County Council's structure plan - the blueprint which includes the green belt development.

Yesterday he told *The Independent* he accepted Hertfordshire's argument that building many of the new homes the county needed in the countryside just west of Stevenage was the best environmental option.

"It just made a lot of sense," he said. People living in the new residential area, the size of a small town, would be able to work and shop in nearby Stevenage and use its public transport infrastructure, thereby minimising pollution.

But, in general, preserving the green belt remained "almost sacrosanct". Next month he will publish a document setting out how the Government would encourage new housing on derelict land within cities and minimise the need to build on greenfield, out-of-town sites. He said he was looking at the case for taxing this kind of development to discourage it. "The renaissance and attractiveness of cities is absolutely crucial for this government."

Environmentalists still have high hopes for this document. But Tony Burton, housing campaigner with the CPRE, said the Hertfordshire decision "locks us in to continued damage to the countryside".

Greens were just as appalled by Mr Prescott's decision last month to order West Sussex County Council to find room for 12,800 homes. That is one third more than West Sussex argued the county could cope with if it was to avoid overcrowding and environmental degradation.

They are still hoping Mr Prescott will intervene to stop the loss of 480 hectares of green belt land north of Newcastle. Mr Prescott's department has until next Wednesday to intervene in the structure plan process.

Hertfordshire wants to create five times as much new green belt land as the quantity which will be lost, guaranteeing half of the county's remaining countryside protection from urban sprawl.

But environmental groups and local residents say the existing green belt was created to stop Stevenage sprawling into rural areas. If it is scrapped when it comes under pressure for housing, then why should the new green belt be any safer, they say. **Stars back ban, page 3**

Britain rattles sabre at Saddam

The Government stepped up its sabre-rattling at Saddam Hussein, ordering the aircraft carrier *Invincible* to the Gulf. But it is unclear whether the US or Britain really have an intention of delivering on their threats. Anthony Bevins and Patrick Cockburn report on the latest standoff between Iraq and the UN Security Council.

The Ministry of Defence said the decision to move the carrier from the Mediterranean followed recent Iraqi attempts to block the work of the UN special commission, sent in to find and destroy weapons of mass destruction.

George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence, said: "Saddam's continued obstruction of UN inspectors is a matter of serious concern. We remain determined to see that the authority of the UN and the international community is upheld."

A US-led team of arms inspectors left Baghdad yesterday, easing the confrontation with Iraq, which had accused its leader of being a spy. UN officials in Baghdad insisted they had planned to leave anyway and their departure was not the result of Iraqi pressure. Scott Ritter, the inspector accused of espionage, said "We will be back" as he and 15 other team members left Baghdad for an air base 40 miles away. They were to fly to Bahrain and then to New York.

Iraq had barred the team from carrying out inspections since Monday.

Meanwhile, Richard Butler, the chief of UN inspectors, is to visit Baghdad to demand full access to all sites.

President Clinton is waiting to see the results of Mr Butler's visit. He said he expected solid support in the UN and praised a Security Council statement this week that deplored the blocking of the US-led team.

The UN Security Council ordered the destruction of Iraq's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes as a condition for ending the 1991 Gulf War. UN officials report progress in eliminating the nuclear and chemical programmes but suspect Iraq is holding back considerable information on biological weaponry. Iraq says the inspectors are simply being used as an excuse to

maintain sanctions against Iraq. Despite a facade of unity at the Security Council and British backing, the US appears to be making no progress in winning broad support for action to punish Iraq. Three of the five permanent members of the Security Council - Russia, China and France - want sanctions to be eased and Iraq to be given hope of them being lifted.

"Our first priority is to pursue all possible diplomatic avenues to persuade Iraq of the folly of its repeated efforts to thwart UNSCOM, and to secure its full and unreserved compliance with Security Council resolutions," said Mr Robertson. "Saddam's track record clearly demonstrates that he only shows respect for diplomacy when it is backed by military strength and readiness."

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WEATHER Time Off, page 2
TELEVISION The Eye
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COLUMN ONE

In TV's battle of ideas, the viewer is the loser

There used to be a joke that all Australian soap operas were made in the same building in downtown Sydney so that the three actors who seemed to star in everything from *The Sullivans* to *Country Practice* could run from studio to studio while changing costumes.

It now appears that British television is no better off for ideas than Seventies Australia was for soap stars.

ITV has announced that it is planning a major drama about the lives of ambulance drivers. This, it claims, will be nothing like *Casualty*. Oh no, nothing like it. The BBC's drama is about ambulance drivers and nurses. ITV's drama is just about ambulance drivers. So it is only half like *Casualty*. The bandage-swaddled extras in ITV's show will no doubt just be dropped off at the doors of casualty departments so viewers don't get confused.



Double taker: Helen Baxendale will star in ITV version of *Friends*

This comes hard on the heels of the *Neighbours* at *War/Neighbours* from *Hell* débacle two weeks ago when both the BBC and ITV "real people" documentary units reached the inevitable point where everybody in the country has been filmed for a fly-on-the-wall documentary.

There is more *déjà vu* programming like this to come because ITV has poached the man who made *Driving School* and *Airport* for the BBC - indeed ITV is planning a programme with the original title of *Airline*. Which, rather like the *Casualty* rip-off, will no doubt stop filming when planes get to airport departure gates so no one can claim it is derivative.

Keeping with the transport theme, there is presumably an ITV documentary planned which will follow people in taxis getting taken to the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool, but will then leave them as they get to the door. If the "real people" documentary trend is not stopped soon then Andy Warhol's "famous for 15 minutes" prediction will prove to have been woefully optimistic: we shall all end up with our own 15-part series.

And when the one British television idea gets a little threadbare at the elbows there is of course other people's ideas to nick: ITV (oh dear, them again) also announced this week its own version of *Friends*, starring Helen Baxendale - who was once in *Cardiac Arrest*, a medical drama that had very few ambulances in it.

This sit-com, *Cold Feet*, will be about six yuppie friends in Manchester. To be fair to ITV this will probably be nothing like *Friends* in so far as *Friends* is funny. An idea which ITV sit-coms never, ever, try to steal.

Even on the cutting edge of television, things are no better. BBC 2 announced this week that they would be investing in more themed nights - one for later this year devoted to the career of Michael Caine, and one in April to mark Spike Milligan's 80th birthday.

This is all very nice for fans of Michael Caine and Spike Milligan, but themed nights have rather overstayed their welcome. When Channel 4 developed them as a wheeze to cover up acres of repeats, you could only admire their *chutzpah*. But now that everyone is at it, it is only a matter of time before we get a night devoted to ambulances driven by Australian actors.

— Paul McCann, Media Correspondent

CONTENTS

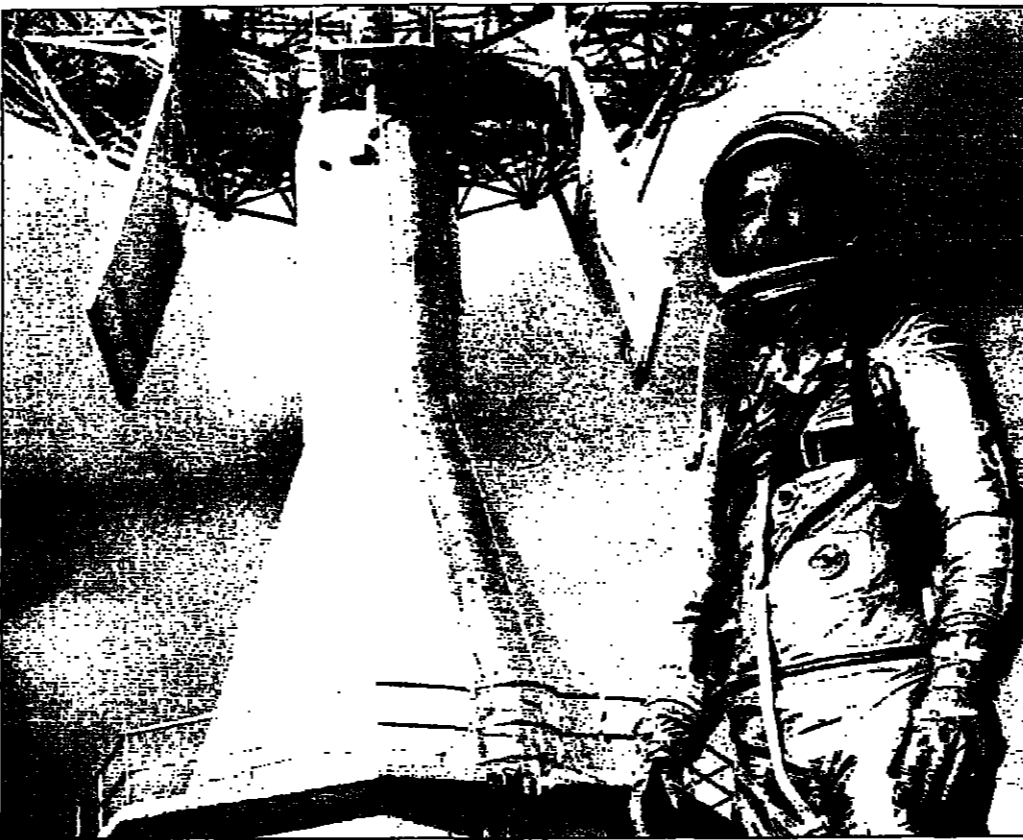
News	3, 4, 7	Arts	17
Politics	8, 9	Leader, letters	18
The way we live	10	Comment	19
In the courts	11	Obituaries	20
Middle East	12	Business	22-23
Politics	10, 11	Sport	Time Off 14-24
Middle East	12	Crosswords	Time Off 12&24
World news	14	Weather	Time Off 2
Saturday story	16	TV & Radio	The Eye

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.42	Italy (lira)	2,843
Austria (schillings)	20.21	Japan (yen)	210.83
Belgium (francs)	59.41	Malta (lira)	0.63
Canada (\$)	2.28	Netherlands (guilders)	3.24
Cyprus (pounds)	0.84	Norway (kroner)	11.96
Denmark (kroner)	11.02	Portugal (escudos)	202.69
France (francs)	9.62	Spain (pesetas)	242.39
Germany (marks)	2.88	Sweden (kroner)	12.76
Greece (drachmel)	157.16	Switzerland (francs)	2.35
Hong Kong (\$)	12.23	Turkey (lira)	336,774
Ireland (punts)	1.15	USA (\$)	1.60

Sources: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

PEOPLE



Pioneer: John Glenn before making his trip into orbit in 1962

Photograph: Reuters

Glenn's second chance to make history in space

If you have the Right Stuff, then it never goes away. That seems to be the opinion of the US space agency Nasa about John Glenn, now 76. He was the first American to orbit the Earth - and, if a mission this October (by which time he will be 77) goes smoothly, also the oldest to do so.

It was 36 years ago that Glenn thrilled his country by catching up with the Soviet Union in the space race. Since then he has become a Democratic senator representing Ohio. Yesterday he declared he was ready to go, confessing to "a real sense of *déjà vu*."

"Needless to say, I'm excited to be back and I'm honoured and I'm privileged," he said. "The important thing is the opportunity that this gives to take us in some new directions in research."

The particular focus of the research will be on ageing, and the effects of space travel on an older body.

Glenn exercises daily and lifts weights, but his body has 36 more years of wear and tear than when it last experienced the extreme forces of blast-off on 20 February, 1962. Doctors will study the effect of weightlessness on Glenn's bones and immune system, and his ability to bounce back afterwards.

Nasa approved Glenn's appointment to become

a payload specialist on the Shuttle *Discovery* for a flight tentatively set for October. "I see this as another adventure into the unknown," Glenn said.

Since he flew into the unknown for the first time, Nasa also has 36 more years of space expertise, but that doesn't translate into a hazard-free mission. One space expert said, "Probably there's as much risk today flying the Shuttle as there was then because (in 1962) Glenn had an escape rocket that there isn't on the orbiter. And I wouldn't want to go through the training he would have to go through."

Even so, Glenn lobbied Nasa extensively to get it to consider using him for geriatric research, helping to connect the space agency's researchers with scientists eager for the information that tests in weightlessness might provide about human ageing.

The tests are "scientific research on the process of getting older, which we're all concerned about," said John Logsdon, of George Washington University.

"What is happening is they've decided to make Glenn the subject of those experiments, not making up the experiment so he can fly," he said. "I think that's an important distinction."

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

Evans pulls plug on old rival Jono Coleman

The award-winning Virgin Radio presenter Jonathan Coleman has been sacked by his former rival and new boss, Chris Evans, while he is on holiday.

The announcement of Coleman's departure was made while he was in his native Australia with his mother, Sylvia, who is ill. But his Russ'n'Jono show partner, Russell Williams, is staying on at the station, in which Evans bought a controlling interest, for £85m, last year. "The show had run its course and Jonathan is moving on," a Virgin spokesman said. "All good things must come to an end and we wish Jono every success in the future."

When Russ'n'Jono were Evans's main breakfast rivals during his spell at Radio 1, Coleman missed no opportunity to take the rise out of him. He taunted Evans with their Sony Award for best breakfast show - a missed



Jono Coleman: Never passed up a chance to needle Evans

prize that angered Evans so much that he refused to accept his Broadcaster of the Year award at the same ceremony. When Evans walked out of Radio 1 because it would not give him Fridays off to prepare his Channel 4 show, Coleman pointed to his own five-

days-a-week presenter's job at Channel 5, and said Evans was a lightweight.

Losing their Virgin Radio breakfast slot to Evans in October was a blow for Russ'n'Jono. There were rumours they had been sacked - until Coleman went to a football match with the Virgin proprietor, Richard Branson, and their new daytime show was announced a week later. Coleman was last on air five weeks ago, before his annual Australian break. Bosses made the decision to let him go two days ago, and told his agent yesterday. Williams, who used to have his own solo show, will now follow Evans at 10am each day, and rising star Robin Banks will do the 4-7pm daytime show. The spokesman said: "Russ has always been a music presenter, whereas Jono was more of a personality."

Seagal sues Saudi prince over £30m film deal

Action hero Steven Seagal has decided law suits speak louder than fists and is suing a Saudi prince he says reneged on a film deal.

Seagal is suing Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, for more than \$25m (£15m) after the prince pulled out of financing the film *Men of Honour*.

The movie star says Prince Abdullah is a man of no honour after failing to go through with a 1992 verbal agreement, confirmed in writing, to finance the film for £30m in return for world-wide distribution rights.

Seagal, 47, star of films such as *Under Siege*, *Out for Justice* and *Under Siege 2: Dark Territory*, is suing for breach of contract, intentional misrepresentation and negligent misrepresentation.

Men of Honour was to star martial arts expert Seagal who says he made expensive preparations for filming, believing he had secured funding from the prince.

According to the suit filed at the Los Angeles Superior Court, the prince stumped up \$1.65m but failed to follow up with the rest. The actor says he has no idea why the prince did not go through with

the deal. As a result, Seagal says his company Seagal/Nasso Productions Incorporated has lost a substantial sum of money.

Seagal's lawyer, Scott Lord, said: "With \$30m all from one source, Steven went ahead with preparations to make the film. The prince forwarded \$1.65m for expenses and then pulled the plug."

Prince Abdullah was served with a writ in New York in November, which Seagal's lawyers say he has ignored. They have asked the prince's lawyers to explain his actions to the Los Angeles court.

— Rosa Prince

UPDATE

PUBLIC FINANCE

Cost of Mandelson's Disney trip

The cost to the taxpayer of Peter Mandelson's four-day visit to the United States earlier this month, during which he visited Disney World, was £3,450, he revealed last night in a series of written Commons replies to John Redwood, shadow Trade and Industry Secretary, and Francis Maude, shadow spokesman on Culture, Media and Sport.

The Minister without Portfolio, said: "Walt Disney are world leaders in entertainment." He had visited Disney World to learn at first hand from their wide experience, lessons that could be applied to the Millennium Dome project. "I had extensive discussions on technical matters, managing the flow of visitors, service facilities, and other aspects of this highly successful public attraction."

Asked by Mr Redwood how much it would have cost to go to the Paris Disney World, Mr Mandelson said he had particularly wanted to visit the Educational Prototype Community of Tomorrow Centre, in Miami, and he had also been able "to fit in a short programme in Washington", arranged by the embassy, following a private overnight stay on arrival. "A direct cost comparison is not therefore relevant in this case," he said.

— Anthony Bevins, Political Editor

EDUCATION

Unit to cut red tape in schools

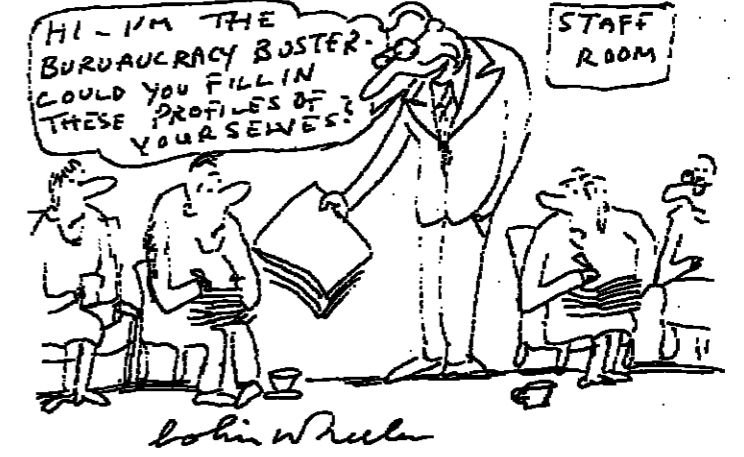
A bureaucracy-busting unit will be set up as part of Government plans to cut red tape in schools.

A report drawn up by a working group established last May recommends that the Government should consult fewer schools about policy, set up pilots to show how teachers can streamline administration, review demands on teachers and simplify the bidding process for funds.

Inspectors are to be urged to concentrate on standards, not on whether schools have written policies for everything and the Government will try to cut down the requirements for assessing and recording pupils' work.

Teachers' leaders welcomed the report with reservations. Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "The Government has at least five new initiatives lined up. There is no evidence that it has considered whether there is time for them in the school day."

— Judith Judd, Education Editor



FISHERIES

Net gain for dolphin population

The Government yesterday acted to help save dwindling dolphin populations by announcing changes to licences for tuna drift net fishing.

Elliot Morley, the fisheries minister, said the move would affect the seas south-west of Britain.

He said: "This is the first step towards ending the unacceptable toll of dolphins in drift nets."

"The UK is pressing for the agreement of other EU member states to take similar immediate action as well as to agree to a phase-out."

The licence will apply to all UK vessels over 10 metres and will prevent additional vessels joining the fleet pending EU agreement to a phase-out.

Mr Morley said that from 1 February, the only UK vessels eligible to fish for tuna using drift nets, for which a separate non-transferable licence will be required, will be those which did so in either 1996 or 1997.

"This will limit participation to a maximum of 10 vessels, and some of these have been approved for a decommissioning grant which they can take up by the end of February."

COMPUTERS

Gearing up for millennium bomb

Four full-time officials are working on the Department of Trade and Industry's initiative to help UK business tackle the millennium computer time-bomb. Cheryl Gillan, the Tory frontbench spokeswoman, was told last night.

Mrs Gillan complained that with less than 500 working days left before the millennium, the Government had wasted precious time by abandoning its own Taskforce 2000, replacing it with Action 2000, which had yet to take any action.

Barbara Roche, the junior trade minister who has been given lead responsibility for the issue, told Mrs Gillan in a written Commons reply that a package of support for small- and medium-sized businesses would be announced this month as part of a Millennium Bug Campaign. Action 2000 has an annual budget of £1m, but Mrs Gillan was told by the Ministry of Defence that its current estimate of the cost of tackling the problem was a tentative £200m.

— Anthony Bevins, Political Editor

HEALTH

Scots cut heart-attack deaths

Scotland is set to achieve its target 40-per-cent reduction in heart disease deaths set under the 1992 Health of the Nation strategy two years ahead of the original deadline of 2000.

Scotland's Chief Medical Officer, Sir David Carter, said the Government would now look at increasing the target from the year 2000 because of the good progress being made.

"We are well on course," he said. "It is reassuring that we're moving in the right direction but we want to see much more movement. We have almost hit the target, so we will want to have a new target."

However, the reduction still leaves Scotland topping the table in the number of premature deaths from heart disease in people under the age of 65.

Sir David added "It is going to remain a priority of the Government, as Scotland has a terrible record in coronary heart disease."

— Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor

BBC World/BBC News 24

An article in yesterday's *Independent* suggested that the BBC cut jobs from its global news channel BBC World to subsidise the cost of BBC News 24. In fact, the funding for the two channels is entirely separate: the former is funded by advertising revenue while BBC News 24 is licence fee funded. No senior World editors are being made redundant.



3/LEADING STORIES

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998
3

Sorry, kids: in the calculator age, sums still matter

Proposals to raise standards in maths with a new emphasis on mental arithmetic and more, better whole-class teaching, will be proposed by the Government's Numeracy Task Force next week. But the report is not a blueprint for a return to traditional teaching methods, says Judith Judd, Education Editor.

British children are lagging behind their counterparts elsewhere because schools' expectations of them are too low, the report says. Children should be expected to do most mathematical calculations in their heads, rather than using pencil and paper, until they are seven or eight.

The task force, led by Professor David Reynolds of Newcastle University, will give a strong endorsement to methods being trialled by the National Numeracy Project, in which 10 minutes are spent at the beginning of each maths lesson on mental calculation. David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, commissioned the inquiry to help fulfil his promise that 75 per cent of 11-year-olds will be at the expected level in maths by the year 2002. The present figure is 62 per cent.

Last year England came tenth out of 17, far behind countries in the Pacific Rim and Eastern Europe, in an international survey of the mathematical performance of nine-year-olds. Countries such as the United States, Canada and Ireland, which were level with or below England six years previously, have pulled ahead.

The task force report draws on the experience of Hungary and Switzerland as well as several projects in Britain, especially the National Numeracy Project.

British teachers spend less time teaching the whole class than those in most other countries. The figure is between 25 and 30 per cent compared with between 70 and 80 per cent in some Pacific Rim countries.

The report urges more whole-class teaching, though it does not specify how much.

Like the Literacy Task Force, whose report was published last year, the maths group want to see a dramatic change in the

educational culture in Britain and an end to the assumption that there will always be a sizeable minority of children who cannot make the grade.

Professor Reynolds and his team do not advocate a return to the teaching methods of the fifties, when children sat in desks in rows and the teacher taught the whole class all the time. Nor do they propose the compulsory chanting of times tables.

Instead, they argue that teachers should use a mixture of methods. Though there should be more whole-class teaching in which children take an active part, pupils should also work in groups and on their own. Practical and investigative maths in which they find out things for themselves should continue alongside a renewed emphasis on mental calculation. Multiplication tables should be taught but in many different ways including the use of games and computers.

The quality of teaching, they say, is just as important as the method and teachers should be given more training. Where schools are getting good results, they should not be required to change.

Ministers have said they expect all primary schools to have a "numeracy hour" every day in the same way as the prescribed literacy hour. However, the report suggests that schools should spend between 45 minutes and an hour each day on numeracy. Experience of teachers involved in the National Numeracy Project suggests that an hour may be too long.

Parents should play a key role in raising standards, the report suggests. Materials should be available for them to help their children with maths even before they start school and help should be offered to parents who feel their own maths is so bad that they cannot help their children.

There should be a national year of reading, perhaps to coincide with International Maths Year in the year 2000. It would involve parents and the rest of the community in the same way as the National Year of Reading which is due to start this September. On the place of calculators in primary schools, on which the team were asked to advise, the report is silent. Some members are thought to be angry the Government decided to ban calculators in primary schools last year before their report was complete.



Calculating look: Children should initially do most sums in their heads, the report says Photograph: Philip Meech

IN MONDAY'S INDEPENDENT



Is Elisabeth Murdoch as scary as her dad?

MEDIA+

Deborah Ross interviews Julie Burchill

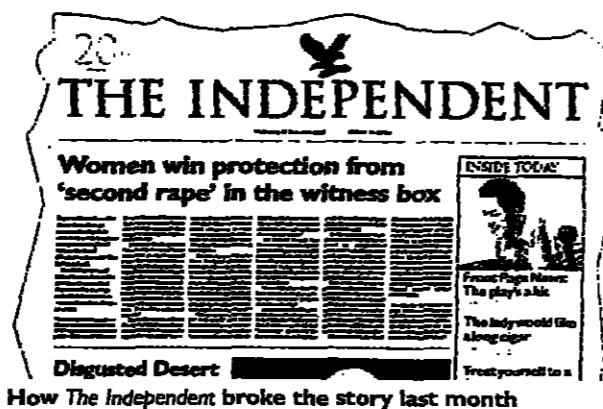
FEATURES

Do our genes determine us? The experts slug it out

SCIENCE

Twenty-one years for rapist who humiliated victims in court

A rapist, whose actions led to Government promises to change the law after he humiliated his victims in court, was told he would have to serve a total of 21 years in jail for a series of vicious attacks. Steve Boggan and Melvyn Howe report.



How The Independent broke the story last month

Milton Brown caused public outrage last year when he made two sex-attack victims re-live their ordeals in the witness box - apparently for nothing more than his own pleasure.

The legal system gave him the right to conduct his own defence and, despite obvious anxiety, the trial judge was powerless in the face of a man who took his rights and abused them as much as his victims.

He could not be named at the time to avoid prejudicing a second case, involving the repeated savage beating of a girlfriend, Susan McDonald, 29, whom he imprisoned for five days without medical help with a festering stab wound and multiple breaks and fractures.

But yesterday, Judge Leo Charles QC, sitting at Knightsbridge Crown Court, west London, sentenced the former mechanic to five years in prison for the attacks on Miss Mc-

Donald, who suffered multiple broken ribs, a broken arm and injuries all over her body after being hit by Brown, 44, with bottles, a pool cue and wood encrusted with nails.

That was added on to the 16 years he was already facing for two other sex attacks in 1996. Only at the end of yesterday's proceedings could it be revealed that he also has a total of 58 convictions for violence, dishonesty and sexual offences, including child molestation.

As Brown screamed and yelled that he had been convicted by a "kangaroo court", and while the jury sat shaking their heads, having found him guilty of the attack on Miss McDonald only by majority verdict, the judge went on: "The public is in need of protection from you because you showed just how dangerous you are and just how

much very serious harm you cause to other people when you are at large." Brown's spree of violence began early in 1996 when he befriended a 38-year-old mother of three who had just arrived in London. She met Brown and accepted his offer of accommodation, which turned into a 15-hour rape ordeal.

After beginning a relationship with Miss McDonald in May 1996, he became obsessive and began accusing her of seeing other men. He beat her over and over again and locked her in his flat in Camberwell, south east London, taking her out in a wig and dark glasses only to hobble to a soup kitchen.

During one of these visits, she escaped when he was distracted by a 31-year-old graduate, who was drunk, having been celebrating an exam success. While Miss McDonald

limped away, the graduate was sexually assaulted at knifepoint.

During last year's trial, he spent days cross examining the women. The rape victim had to give evidence twice after the jury was discharged following a violent exchange between Brown and the judge, Timothy Pontius.

"Do I have to put up with this?" one of the women asked the judge. "I have never been so humiliated in my life."

After jailing Brown for 16 years, Judge Pontius said it was "highly regrettable" that the law allowed a defendant "to question his victims in needlessly extended and agonising detail for the obvious purpose of intimidation and humiliation".

Tony Blair and Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, have said they want to end an offenders' right to commit "second rape" in court. And last month, Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor, told *The Independent* that judges would be given more powers to intervene in cross-examinations, conducting it themselves in cases where alleged rapists appeared to be humiliating their victims.

The Home Office said yesterday that proposed changes could be put forward as soon as the spring. It is understood the main obstacle will be in complying with the European Convention on Human Rights, which gives defendants the right to represent themselves.

Sports stars back ban on sale of school fields

Senior British sports figures yesterday welcomed the Government's pledge to stop state schools and local authorities selling off playing fields.

As three government departments announced co-ordinated statutory measures to halt further sales, Tessa Sanderson, Olympic javelin thrower, and Roger Untley, England's rugby union manager, spoke of the urgent need for more facilities

if Britain hopes to breed the next generation of sports stars. Regulations to be tabled to the School Standards and Framework Bill, which is currently before Parliament, will mean state schools will need the permission of the education secretary before selling any more land. At the same time, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Department of

Culture, Media and Sport intend to tighten planning controls. A new adjudication process will rule on local authority sales which are opposed by the English Sports Council.

The Government has also sent a clear message to LEAs "discouraging" them from selling any more before the proposed legislation became law. The legislation currently before Parliament affects schools in

England but it is likely that yesterday's move would be extended across the country.

Over the past two decades school playing fields have been sold off at an alarming rate as local authorities tried to raise money from surplus assets. More than 5,000 have gone to private developers since 1981, and thousands more are under threat.

— Clare Garner

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Dublin renews calls for Bloody Sunday investigation

The Irish government has stepped up its pressure for an independent public investigation of Bloody Sunday in advance of next week's anticipated Commons statement on the issue by Tony Blair. David McKitterick and Alan Murdoch assess its chances.

The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, is understood to have underlined to the Prime Minister in a telephone conversation his view that nothing less than an independent public inquiry would be acceptable to Dublin. Fourteen civilians were killed in the incident in Londonderry in 1972.

The Irish authorities are determined any new investigation should be fully independent and headed by a figure of prestige acceptable to all sides. Mr Ahern made clear again his view that an apology would not suffice.

On Wednesday Mr Blair is due to answer a parliamentary question from Norman Godman, chairman of the Labour party's back-bench committee on Northern Ireland, who yesterday travelled to Londonderry to view the scene of the killings. He said he believed Tony Blair and the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, were sympathetic to calls for a fresh inquiry. The 26th anniversary of the deaths falls on 30 January. A campaign to have the incident reopened has gained momentum in recent years, winning the support of Dublin and other important elements. The past year in particular has seen the emergence

of new evidence shedding fresh light on the incident.

Dublin has compiled its own report, said to provide detailed analysis of the latest evidence and to draw "very strong conclusions".

While the Government has come under pressure to act, it represents a political and legal minefield for the authorities.

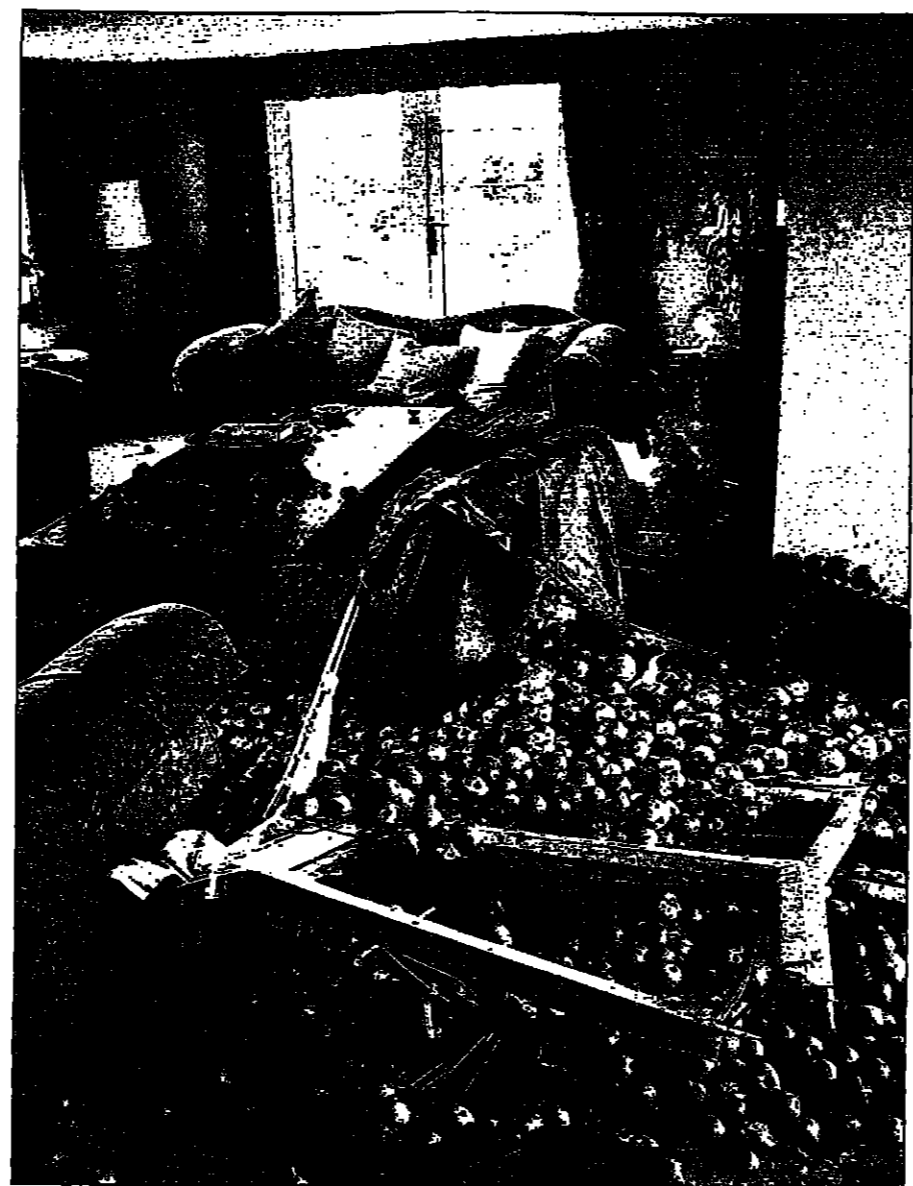
Almost any move, whether in the form of a new inquiry or an official apology, raises the question of possible prosecution of the paratroopers who fired the shots or, conceivably, their superior officers.

It is presumed the authorities would wish at all costs to avoid charges and trials.

There is no clear optimism in Irish government circles that the inquiry will be conceded, given Ministry of Defence reservations about the damage that might result for the Army's reputation and the civil service if a cover-up were exposed.

Campaigner Tony Doherty, whose father Paddy was among those killed, said: "It appears from all accounts that the British Cabinet may be at odds with itself as to how it may proceed. There are clearly different forces at work. Some of the members of the Cabinet may well agree with demands to establish a new inquiry but there are forces such as the Ministry of Defence, who would be against it."

Yesterday seven IRA prisoners were transferred from Britain to the Irish Republic. They included five men who six months ago were jailed for 35 years for planning to blow up British power-stations in 1996, and members of the "Balcombe Street gang", who were responsible for 16 killings in England in the 1970s.



Apple avalanche: Householder Tim Reeve (right) and his family escaped injury yesterday when a lorry overturned outside their home in Aspall Green, near Debenham, Suffolk, spilling a ton of fruit into the property



Photographs: Anglia Press Agency

Vicar jailed for attacking wife

A Church of England vicar accused of trying to kill his wife in an apparently motiveless hammer attack was yesterday jailed for five years.

The Rev Michael Golightly, 54, of Durham City, was acquitted of attempted murder by a jury at Newcastle Crown Court but convicted of causing grievous bodily harm with intent.

The court was told that Enid Golightly, 55, almost died after being struck a single blow with a 1½lb hammer while she was asleep in bed. The blow was of such force that fragments of bone were pushed 30mm into her brain. Golightly denied responsibility and his counsel claimed an undetected intruder could have launched the attack.

Essex wild-cat alert

An expert in trapping dangerous animals yesterday raised the possibility that a wild cat is roaming Essex woodlands.

Sightings of a creature in Brentwood could be the sign of a wild puma, according to big-cats expert Quentin Rose. Essex police called him in to carry out an investigation of Vicarage Woods after people reported sightings of what appeared to be a lioness. After a search of the woods yesterday, Mr Rose concluded there was no evidence of a big cat at that location, but conceded that there was evidence to suggest there could be wild cats in the area.

Happy landing

Two Britons whose aircraft was forced down by a jet fighter after straying into Russian military airspace were last night preparing to fly home.

Russian authorities earlier said Cliff Davidson and Mark Graham Jeffreys would not be charged for encroaching on the Kaliningrad enclave, home of Russia's Baltic fleet. The Russians sent a fighter to bring the plane down after it was blown off-course by winds while flying over the Baltic en route to London. Kaliningrad is cut off from the rest of Russia and bordered by Lithuania and Poland.

Meningitis jab plan

All first year students due to study in Southampton will be immunised against meningitis after three freshers died from the disease there last year.

The programme of mass immunisation against group C meningitis has been recommended by Dr Mike Barker, the city's consultant in communicable diseases.

He believes the jabs are necessary "as a local response to a locally identified health need".

Gays protest after sex video convictions

Gay activists yesterday protested at the prosecution of seven gay men who were filmed in a private video having consensual sex. Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, reports on a case which has outraged many in the homosexual community.

The case of the so-called Bolton Seven, who were convicted last Monday, at the town's crown court of various sexual offences, is rapidly becoming a cause célèbre among gays. At least one of those convicted, 55-year-old Terry Connell, has been warned by the judge that he faces imprisonment. Janet Cragg, a lawyer representing six of the defendants, said their prosecution, which is

thought to have cost around £300,000, was a "complete waste of public money".

Peter Tatchell, of the gay pressure group Outrage, said the seven were in effect being "martyred". He added: "It is not in the public interest or in the interests of justice that these men have been prosecuted let alone that some of them may be sent to prison."

The case began after a former lodger of one of the seven sent police a video of the men involved in various sexual acts, including buggery and oral sex. A police raid on the home of one of the men in the town later found another video.

Although some of the men, who all come from the area, admitted buggery, four of them denied gross indecency. Under the Sexual Offences Act 1967, in which homosexual acts between two consenting adults were legalised, such sex is only le-

gal if no more than two men are present.

Although three of the defendants were also convicted of sex with someone under age - one of them was 17 at the time - activists are concerned that such prosecutions are an attack on consensual gay sex. The men claimed the videos were simply for their personal use and that everyone had taken part with consent.

The Crown Prosecution Service yesterday defended its decision to bring the case, saying it had considered both the facts and the "public interest" in bringing the action very carefully.

It is understood that when the matter was first raised with the CPS there were suggestions that some of the men - whose age ranged from 17 to 55 - had been paid to take part, and that drugs had been used. There was no evidence of this raised at the trial.

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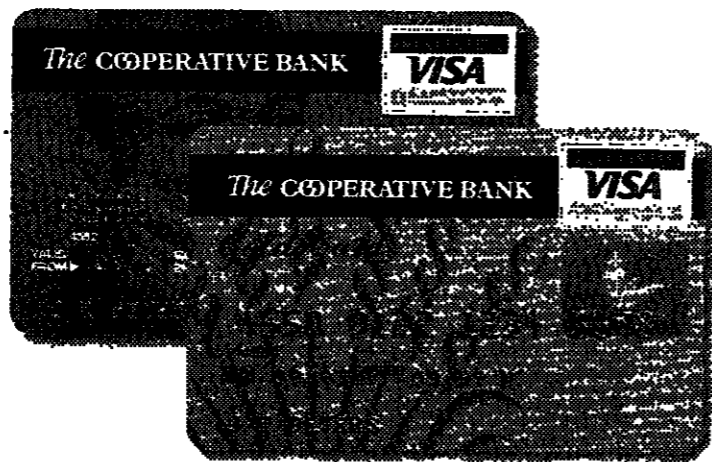
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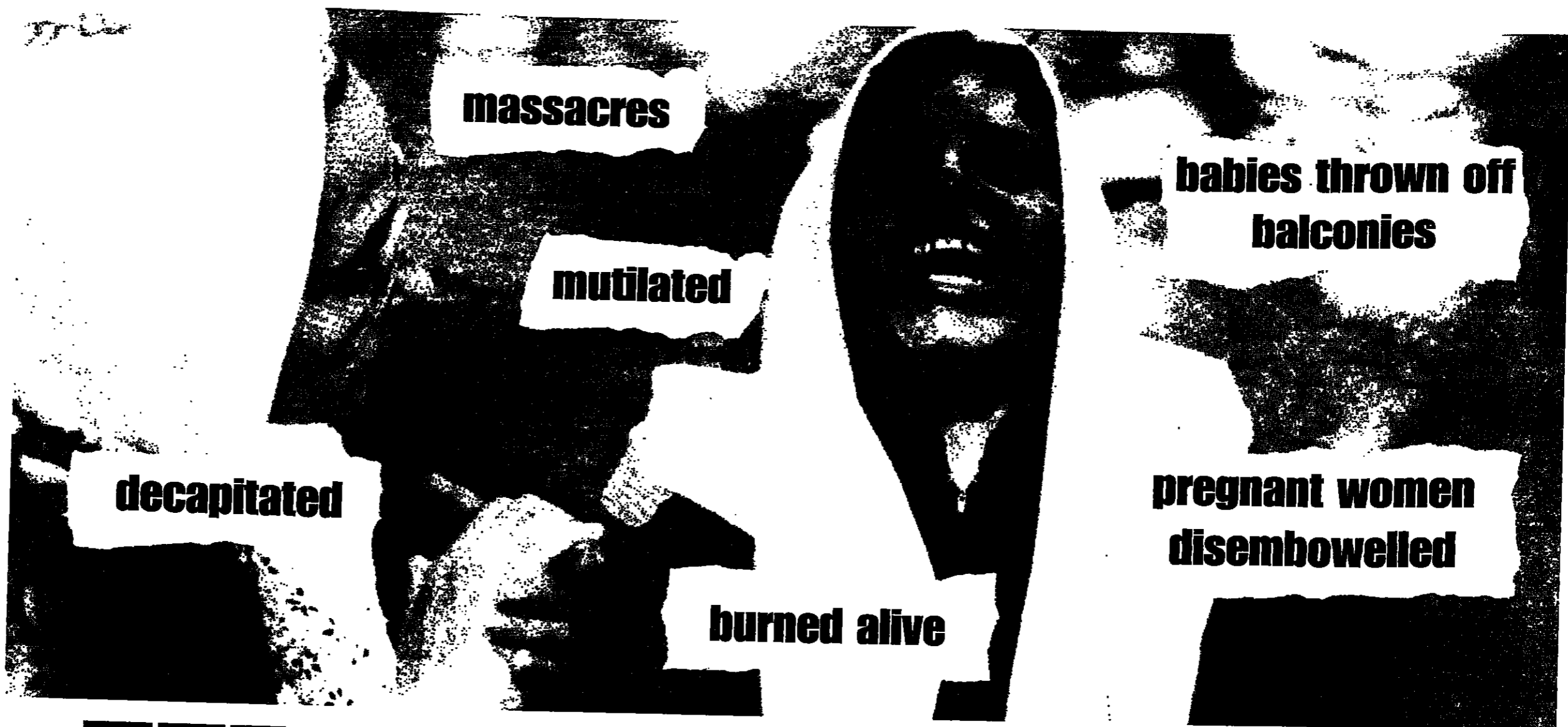
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Amnesty International: working worldwide for the release of prisoners of conscience, fair trials for political prisoners and an end to torture, extra-judicial executions, "disappearances" and the death penalty.

No words — there are no words — to express what this Algerian woman is feeling. In this conflict children are killed in front of parents, people are blowtorched and howl like bagpipes, ordinary folk are caught in horror beyond imagining. You can do something to stop these things, but knowing yourself as you do, are you more likely just to turn the page? Even if there were words, what words could touch you?

On 27th August this year, a group of armed men entered Rais, the village of the woman in the picture, and killed about three hundred people. They spared neither women nor children. The victims died in ways too hideous to describe.

But were we to catalogue each brutal detail, it would still be beyond our power to convey the horror of what was done. Words can't say it and photographs, however gruesome, don't show it.

When words lose power.

It is a filthy conflict in Algeria. Both Government forces and armed groups have committed atrocities.

The Government uses the gangs' atrocities to justify its massive repression of human rights, the armed groups use the repression to justify their atrocities.

The woman from Rais got caught in the middle.

We don't know precisely what loss she suffered, whether she saw her family murdered, her baby dashed to its death, her small daughter disembowelled, her mother's head rolling in the dust.

All these things have happened, if not to this woman, to others just as uninvolved, helpless and anguished. The words on the picture come from the opening paragraph of Amnesty International's latest report on Algeria. We have become used to seeing words like these in our newspapers.

Shocking headlines no longer touch us. We're not moved, we resent being manipulated. Experience says that you'll read this page, turn over and forget it, because this is how you, like the rest of us, have learned to cope with clamouring ads.

Listen to what the children said.

Two children, sisters of 11 and 13, spoke about the night their parents were killed.

"We woke up at the noise, some armed men were hitting father with a shotgun. They pushed father into the kitchen and the others took mum out into the courtyard and tied her hands. They cut her throat. The other men called from inside the house and the one who slaughtered mum shouted: 'Wait I'm finishing'. We pulled mum into the house and closed her eyes and covered her with a blanket, and also covered father; he had also had his throat cut. We cried and screamed."

Reader, wake up. This isn't a game of words. It isn't some clever advertising agency trying to score a 'creative' coup. It's a plea, a big desperate one, for your help.

You can make a big difference.

We need you. Even as you are reading this, people are being murdered, tortured, being made to "disappear", thrown in jail without trial.

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Is it right to murder, torture, or imprison people for their religion, the colour of their skin or beliefs?

You may say 'no', but unless you stand up for human

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Amnesty International was founded on the idea that ordinary people can make a difference in the world, can help to stop murder, torture and other abuse of human rights. Since our foundation in 1961, we have proved over and over and over that we can help.

Amnesty is international.

Do you dislike the idea of western liberals laying down the moral law to the rest of the world?

Good, so do we. Amnesty International is a worldwide organisation with members in just about every country on earth. In some places our members risk their lives to stand up for human rights. And people in that deadly danger are standing up for your human rights, whether or not you choose to recognise the fact.

Decades of broken promises.

After the Second World War, the world's nations signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then every single one of them has at some time broken its promise to defend and not abuse human rights.

Only one voice in the world is strong enough to force politicians to keep their promises. Yours.

But only you can convince yourself that you want to stand up for other people's human rights.

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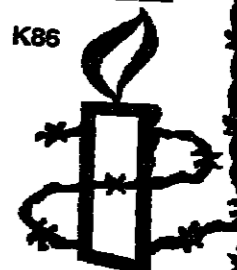
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The 'Chabaneau', a blowtorch, is routinely used by the Algerian security forces to make suspects 'sing'.

Main picture: Distraught survivor of a massacre carried out at Sidi Rais village by an armed group.

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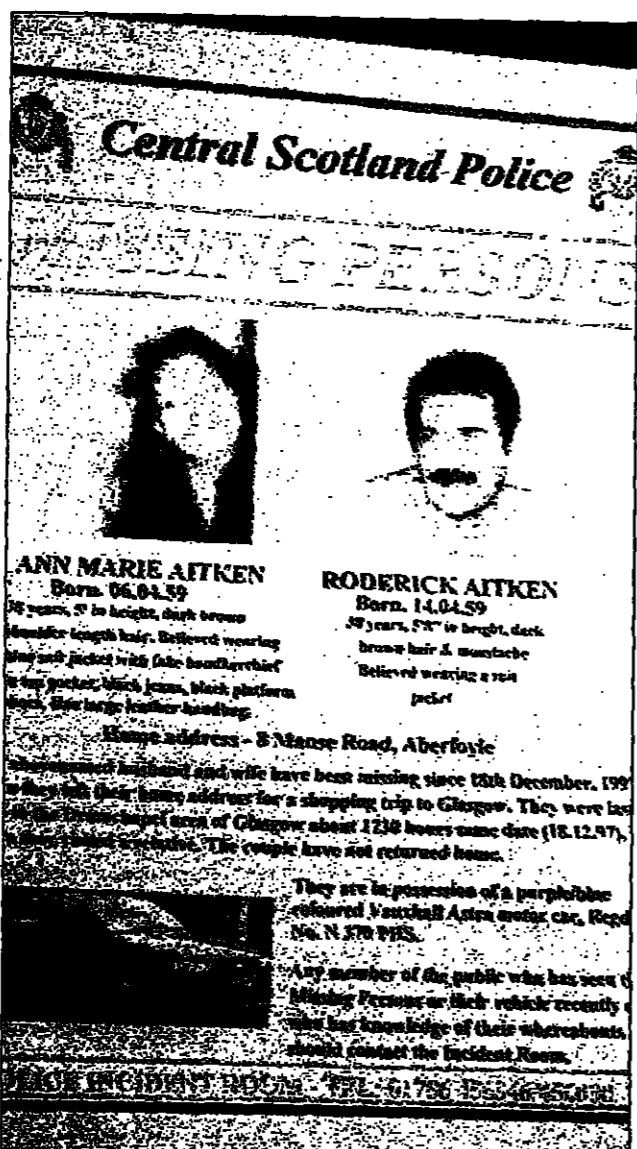
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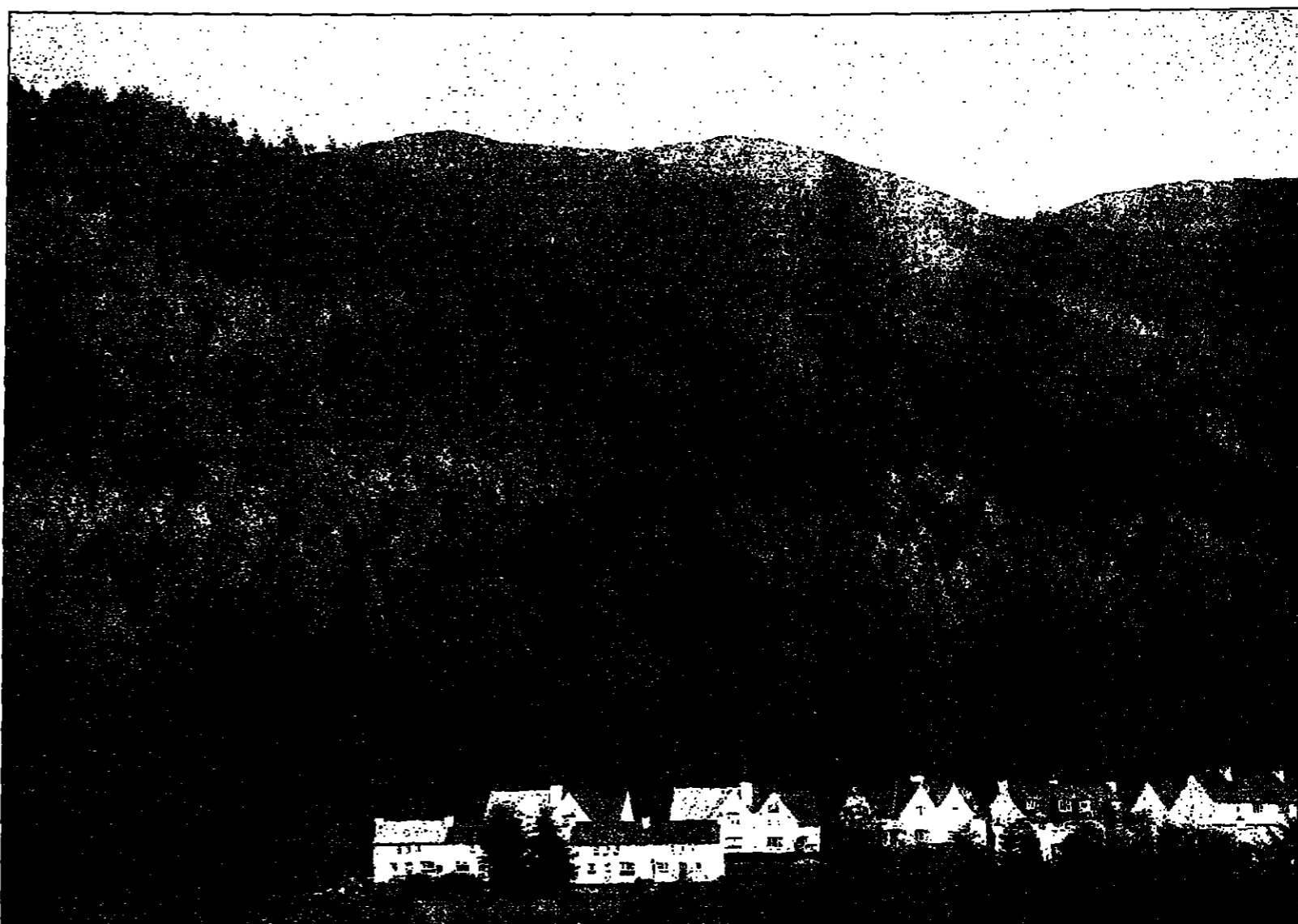
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Mystery of couple who never came back from shopping



The village of Aberfoyle (right), where Roddy and Ann Marie Aitken lived when their disappearance prompted a big police search (left). Their daughter, also named Ann Marie (below), does not hold out much hope that her parents are still alive.
Photographs: Tom Pilston



Helicopters, frogmen and dozens of police officers are involved in a massive hunt for a couple who disappeared 30 days ago while out shopping.
Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent, went to Scotland to try to unravel the mystery.

Roddy and Ann Marie Aitken seemed to have a lot to live for. Christmas was coming and they were about to spend two weeks with their 13-year-old son, Roddy, in Cyprus catching some winter sun.

They were, says their other child, Ann Marie, who turned 20 this week, loving parents who thought the world of their family. On 18 December they drove the 25 miles from their home in the tiny town of Aberfoyle, in central Scotland, to a Glasgow suburb to deliver Christmas cards to Roddy senior's parents, Jessie and Archie.

Shortly afterwards they spoke to their daughter and a friend on their mobile phone to say they would be returning in an hour or so. Ann Marie recalled: "They said they were still doing some shopping and wouldn't be back for a while. We didn't talk long - mobiles are so expensive. I got worried the next day but I didn't want to telephone anyone in case they just turned up. I kept thinking they would be back to-

morrow. I thought they must come home for Christmas Day. My wee brother went to his friends for Christmas. I sat here with my boyfriend and waited for the phone to ring." She waited until Boxing Day - eight days after the disappearance - before her grandparents persuaded her to get the police involved. Speaking at the family home, where she is staying with her brother, she added: "I don't think they will be coming home now, it's been a month without a trace - it's just too long."

For the past fortnight a huge search op-



eration has been taking place among forest-covered peaks and along miles of twisting road amid some of Scotland's most stunning countryside. Interpol and police forces throughout Britain have also been alerted.

But so far no bodies have been found, no burnt-out wreckage discovered, no tell-tale skid marks or car roof staring up from the bottom of a loch.

The Cyprus holiday, which had been paid for with £1,000 cash and was their first foreign trip in six years, remains unused, and the couple's bank accounts are untouched.

Rumours of underworld connections and contract killings have surfaced but detectives believe they are fantasy.

The police are baffled. Surely the bodies would have been found by now if it was an accident, and why would they run away at Christmas? Was this a murder or missing-persons inquiry? Were they looking for one or two people? Nothing makes sense.

As part of the detective work the hunt for the two 38-year-olds shifted yesterday to London, where the family lived before moving to Aberfoyle seven years ago. The six-year stint down south in Fulham and later Sutton, in Surrey, where Roddy worked as a roofer, was the only time the family ventured out of Scotland.

Brought up amid the violent, sprawling Glasgow council estates of Drumchapel in

the north-west of the city, Roddy and Ann Marie started dating at school, were married at 18 and parents a year later.

As a child Roddy was taken to the Trossachs, a wild, beautiful land of steep-sided glens, snowy peaks and dark lochs, about 35 miles north of the Glasgow estates. When a chance came to swap their London council flat for one in safe and unexciting Aberfoyle, Perthshire, he grasped it.

But the Glaswegians did not fit into the small, close community. For one thing the parents did not work, relying mainly on benefits, and a disability allowance from a car accident in which Roddy injured his leg. Then there was the drinking. Roddy was barred from several pubs in the town after a number of alcohol-fuelled fights and arguments.

Neighbours said that they were "friendly enough", "no trouble really", "kept

themselves to themselves", while one commented: "They were still quite new - seven years is a short time in Aberfoyle". They did most of their socialising in their old Glasgow haunts. On several occasions Roddy drove home along the back roads after having one too many.

In the past fortnight hundreds of miles of forest tracks have been meticulously searched by the police in case their blue Vauxhall Astra slipped over the edge on that December night.

So far the only clues are a 7pm sighting of them at an Asda store just outside Glasgow shortly after the visit to Roddy's parents, and the calls to a friend and to their daughter.

Shortly after the police went public a tabloid newspaper claimed the disappearance was linked to underworld connections. Police investigations have shown this is al-

most certainly nonsense. Roddy was apparently considered a "Ned" - a ducker and diver. But he was not known by Glasgow's criminal community and with a handful of convictions for minor drink-related offences it was hardly the stuff of *The Godfather*.

The officer in charge of case, Detective Chief Superintendent, John Ogg, said: "There are no indications whatsoever that there are drug barons or underworld enforcers involved."

He added: "There seems to be a piece of the jigsaw missing. We feel there is someone, or some people with vital information they are withholding."

So are the police looking for a killer or runaways or both? As one officer indicated, we may never know: "This area is very hostile for anyone looking for a body, especially if hidden. You could search for years and find nothing."

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Spencer rebuffed over privacy law

The European Commission of Human Rights yesterday barred Earl Spencer from pursuing a privacy case involving his former wife. Lord Spencer had claimed UK law does not protect him from press intrusion. Michael Sreeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, considers the implications.

The decision by Lord Spencer to go to the Human Rights Commission in Strasbourg was taken two years ago but yesterday's hearing seemed to come with impeccable timing.

It followed a move by the Government to incorporate the Convention on Human Rights into UK law, the death of Lord Spencer's sister Diana, Princess of Wales, and the recent lurid coverage of the Earl's divorce case. His case was that despite a Press Complaints Commission condemnation of intrusive reporting three years ago of him and his then wife, Victoria Lockwood, British law gives him no effective remedy against the offending newspaper.

Although the PCC can, and did, condemn a newspaper for intrusion - in this case the *News of the World* - it cannot force compensation, nor can it prevent publication of an offending article.

But yesterday's quick rejection by the European Com-

mission of the Earl and Ms Lockwood's application - which came as a surprise to some lawyers - means that any emerging law of privacy Britain will depend on domestic judges. After a few hours' deliberation, the commission ruled that the case should not go before the European Court of Human Rights.

In theory, had the case gone to the European Court, a judgment against the Government would have forced ministers to bring in a statutory law of privacy giving victims the right to damages and in some circumstances the right to stop damaging stories from being published. Ministers, however, who said they were "satisfied" with yesterday's decision, have said they have no such plans.

The future of a privacy law now hangs on the decision of the Government to incorporate the human rights convention into British law.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, has accepted that this is likely to lead to a judge-made law of privacy though both media and lawyers alike are concerned that this could lead to a haphazard development of the law.

Dan Tenech, a media lawyer for the London firm Lovell White Durrant, said the ruling did not mean there would be no judge-made privacy law, simply that it would not come from Strasbourg. "It seems the view of the commission is that it is for individual nations to balance the competing interests of freedom of the press and privacy."

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On yer bike offer evokes Tebbit memories

Norman Tebbit's controversial advice for the jobless to get on their bikes, as his father had once done in the hunt for elusive employment, could become reality for hundreds of jobless people in Cornwall.

The Employment Service is reviewing the transport problems faced by long-term unemployed people living in remote areas, and a Commons committee was told by a senior official this week that bicycles could be made available where no public transport options were viable.

The Government's New Deal programme for unemployed people, aged 18 to 24 and out of work for more than six months, was launched in Cornwall on 5 January, with a target of helping 900 people into work. A further project, to help 2,950 people aged 25 or over, out of work for longer than 12 months, will be started in June as part of the £3.5bn Welfare to Work programme.

An Employment Service spokeswoman said jobless people were being consulted on the problems they faced getting to and from potential workplaces, and a report was expected by next month.

— Anthony Bevins



Pedal power: Tony Blair and other EU leaders taking time out during last year's Amsterdam summit

Blair snubs Brown over chairing welfare committee

The Prime Minister has snubbed Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with a decision to stop him chairing the new ministerial group on welfare reform.

Anthony Bevins, Political Editor, reports on a frost in Downing Street relations.

The Chancellor is on the special ministerial working group on welfare reform — set up by the Prime Minister this week to take charge of the crucial pol-

icy area — and John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, is not. But Tony Blair has ordered that whenever he cannot attend, his place as chairman is to be taken by Mr Prescott.

An informed government source told *The Independent* yesterday that the unusual decision to keep Mr Brown out of the chair was quite deliberate, and an indication of the annoyance felt by No 10 over Mr Brown's recent conduct.

While Mr Blair has made light of the new biography of the Chancellor, in which it is made clear that Mr Brown feels "betrayed" by Mr Blair's decision to stand for the leadership in 1994, in breach of an alleged private pact, the Prime Minister's close friends are dismayed at what is seen as a display of poor judgement.

The biography, written by Paul Routledge, Political Correspondent of *The Independent* on Sunday, says Mr Brown believes he could have beaten Mr Blair, but that he decided to stand aside out of a self-sacrificial sense of duty to the party.

The Prime Minister has said publicly that there was no pact, and his supporters say it is nonsense to argue that Mr Brown could have beaten Mr Blair in 1994; history is being rewritten.

More damagingly, however, there is a strong feeling inside No 10 that Mr Brown is actively engaged in a campaign to succeed Mr Blair as leader — even though there is no vacancy — and that campaign is damaging the Chancellor's ability to work as part of the ministerial team.

One authoritative source told *The Independent* that the Prime Minister had a very high regard for Mr Brown, and still

regards him as a friend, but his involvement in the biography and his contribution to the debate over lone parents' benefit had raised a doubt about his judgement. The sooner Mr Brown and his colleagues "settled down", the better.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister maintained the theme of his campaign for welfare reform with a reassurance that any change would "work with the grain of the British people".

Mr Blair said in an interview with the BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that there was a continuing manifesto commitment to the universal state pension, which would be updated in line with prices.

But he would not rule out a consideration of the future of the state pension in the welfare system for the future, adding: "I'm not going to speculate on what is going to be in 25 years until we're ready to come out with proposals upon it."

A government source said that should not be taken as a threat to abolish the state pension, any more than a suggestion of public-private partnership on welfare should be interpreted as a threat to introduce compulsory second pensions — even for those who could not afford them.

The next stage of the programme, following consideration by the ministerial group, and a round-table review by the full Cabinet, will be publication of a Green Paper drafted by Frank Field, minister for welfare reform.

Within the principles set out in that paper — and subject to further public consultation — detailed proposals would then begin to emerge over the coming year on the various specific issues, like pensions and family benefits.

Gulf veterans give back medals in protest over illness

In a poignant demonstration of their disgust at how they have been treated since the Gulf War, dozens of men who fought against Saddam Hussein will today hand back their campaign medals. Ion Burrell reports on how time is running out for many of the veterans of Operation Desert Storm.

Handing back the medals is the only way we can think of to highlight our situation. Nothing like this has happened before."

He added: "We were proud to receive the campaign medals but some of the other guys have already had to sell theirs off to make ends meet."

A letter will be presented to the MoD, complaining at the treatment of all British servicemen after they leave the armed forces.

Tomorrow veterans will lay wreaths at the Cenotaph in remembrance of comrades who died during the conflict and 160 wooden crosses will be left in memory of the veterans known by the NGVFA to have died since the war.

The veterans' concerns that they were not being given enough support increased last week with the news that a leading Scottish scientist had been forced to turn to the American billionaire Ross Perot to fund his research into Gulf War illnesses.

Dr Goran Jamai, a consultant at the Institute of Neurological Sciences at Glasgow's Southern General Hospital, has been unable to continue his much-valued work due to lack of government funding. He turned to Mr Perot because he had financed other Gulf War illnesses research in America.

British-based research into the conditions of the veterans is not expected to be ready for another two years.

The MoD insisted yesterday that the issue was being taken very seriously and that all was being done to try to help those who are ill.

A spokesman said: "The medals will be received with sadness. We realise that if people are going to make this gesture they don't do so lightly."

"We are keen to meet them but feel they are pushing at an open door, because the department feels it is doing as much as it can. It's a shame."

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Room with a view: Elizabeth Buttle's farmhouse in Cwmann village. She has taken refuge with her daughter

Photograph: Wales News and Pictures

Oldest mother brings media circus to quiet corner of Wales

Somehow woodcarver Nancy Hemming had managed to miss out on all the gossip. Richard Smith visited her hilltop cottage overlooking the ruggedly beautiful sheep farming village Cwmann in west Wales, which just happens to be the home of Elizabeth Buttle, Britain's oldest mum.

Since it was revealed that a 60-year-old farmer had given birth two months ago to a boy called Joe - nicknamed "Skippy" - tongues have been wagging as

never before and Cwmann has become a far-flung scenic setting for the latest media frenzy.

But Nancy Hemming had remained blissfully unaware, until yesterday. "Oh well, that's nice," she said. "I don't have a television and I don't read the papers. I just listen to Radio Four so I hadn't heard anything about it. But I think she must have an amazing amount of courage to start having children again at 60."

Birth is always a prime topic on everyone's lips in Cwmann at this time of year. But the talk is usually about the offspring thousands of speckle-faced ewes will produce when lambing gets into full swing during March.

Red kites and buzzards still soar above the hillsides but most of the rain-sodden fields are deserted because farmers have put their flocks indoors to protect them from the worst ravages of winter.

Villagers struggled to remember the last time Cwmann hit the headlines: a Land-Rover was used in a ram-raid at the local garage and an RAF jet crashed into a nearby mountain. But the biggest scandal involved a local farmer who was jailed for sexual activities with a donkey and some pigs.

Cwmann (pop 600) stands 950 feet above sea level and boasts a primary school, a village post office and four pubs. Most people find work on the farms, at a large slaughter house in nearby Llanbydder, or at the light industrial units in Lampeter.

Yesterday, Elizabeth Buttle was still staying out of the limelight at her 40-year-old daughter Belinda Pleavin's home four miles away. But a member of her family claimed she had sold her story to the *News of the World* for £100,000.

She keeps horses, cattle and sheep on the 97-acre spread. Her grandson, Nick Pleavin, 19, said: "The baby has completely changed my gran's life. She is much jollier now."

"The baby sleeps in the bed with her. She started off breastfeeding him but he drinks milk from a bottle now. He is quite chubby and doesn't cry much. His hair started off blonde but it's going a bit ginger now."

"She is very proud of Joey and shows him off to everyone. He has a little yellow teddy bear in his cot which my gran bought

him for Christmas. Although I'm his uncle he is just like a little brother to me."

"My youngest brother Matthew is five and mums been given gran the babygrow he wore when he was little. Gran is a hard worker who has gained all her life. She was offered a lot of money by the paper and you can do what you like with that."

"I know she wants to get laser treatment for her eyes in Russia which will cost her £3,000."

There was no sign of the baby's father, Peter Rawstrom, 58, who runs a fodder merchants business with his wife Vera, 56 - mother of his four other children - from their home in Llangybi, five miles from Cwmann.

But the reporters, photographers and television crews, who have made their base at the Tafarn Jen inn on the edge of the village, were still looking.



Elizabeth Buttle: Very proud of baby Joe

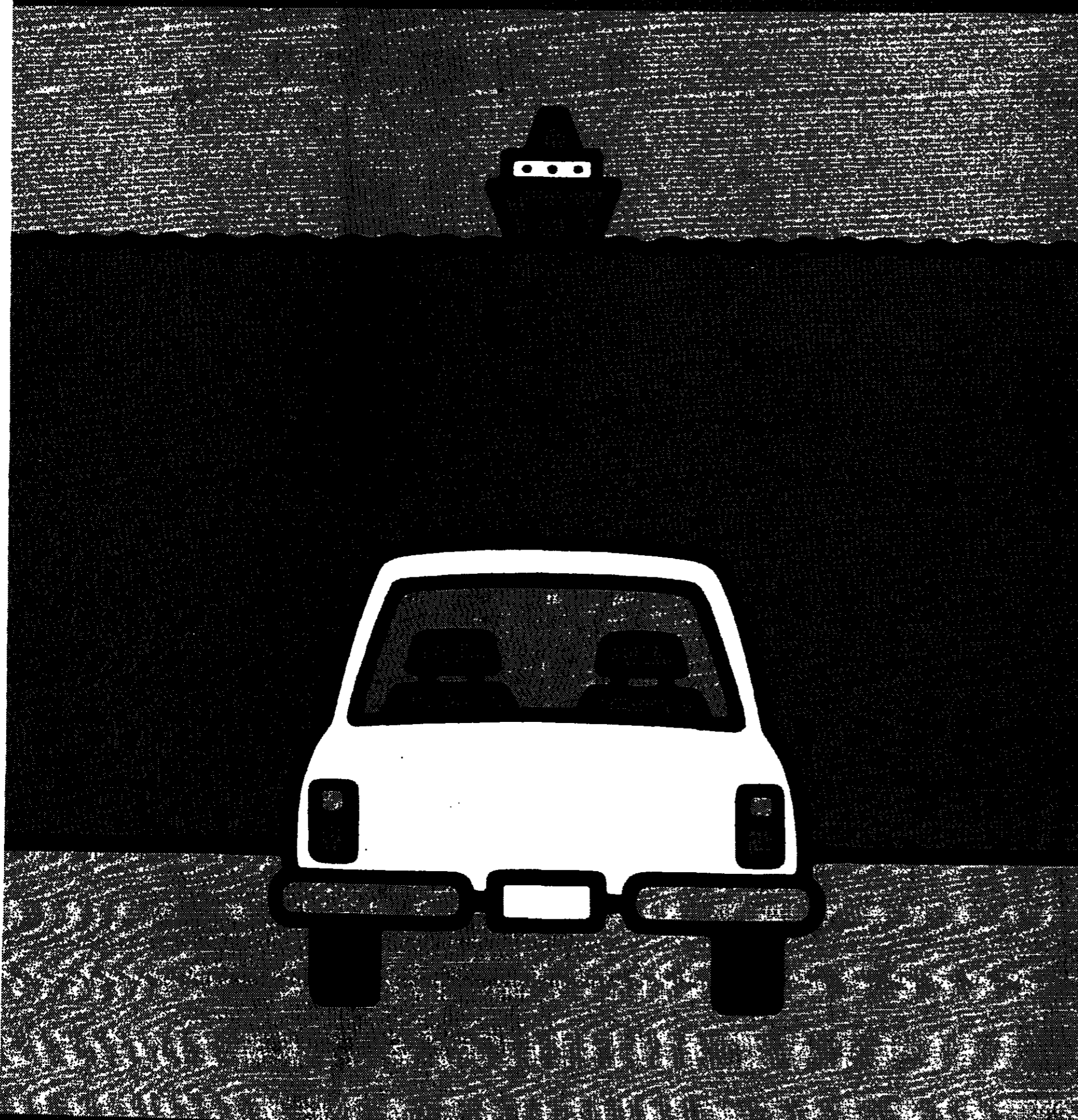
Judith and Tom Newman, who moved from Croydon a year ago when they bought the pub, said it had made their week.

"Some days we can sit here for five hours in winter and take 78p but on Wednesday our takings were £300," said Mrs Newman. "Nobody believed Liz was pregnant at first. Some people knew and others didn't. People were thinking, is she or isn't she."

"Liz has always been a very private person and an extremely hard worker. I admire her. As a woman on your own you have to be tough to run a hill farm and have a small baby."

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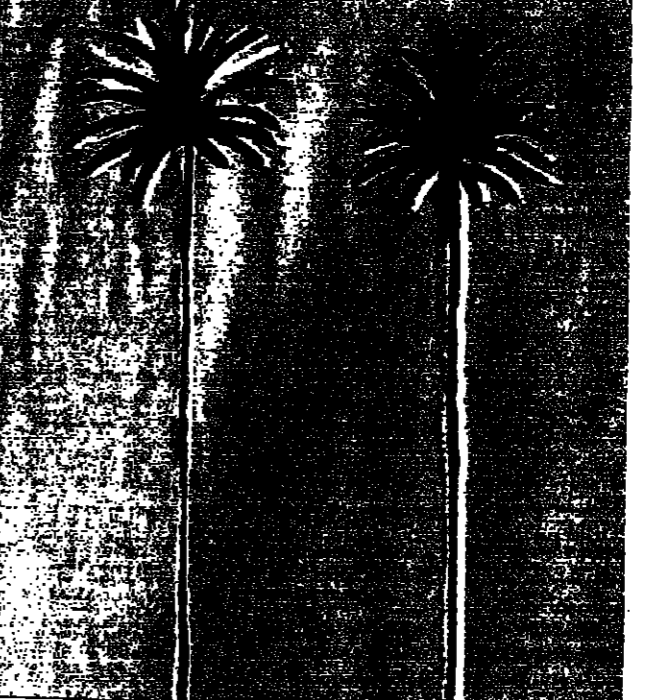


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11/IN THE COURTS

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998
11



Trial of strength: Richard Branson (left) and Guy Snowden arriving at the High Court for yesterday's hearing Photographs: Karl Prouse

Trial halted as rape case girl breaks down

A 10-year-old girl allegedly raped and indecently assaulted by a gang of classmates repeatedly broke down yesterday during the Old Bailey trial of the four boys she claims attacked her.

Giving evidence over a video link on the second day of the hearing, she became increasingly distressed and tired amid cross-examination by lawyers defending the schoolboys.

At one stage, while being questioned by Steven Kay QC about the alleged incident at their London primary school in May last year, she began sobbing uncontrollably. The hearing was adjourned several times to allow her to have a break.

She was told by the judge, Mrs Justice Bracewell: "I don't want you to get upset. Mr Kay and others have to ask questions and I am here to see the questions are fair. If they are not I'll stop them."

"I know it may be upsetting for you when sometimes you are asked about something you don't agree about. Try not to get upset."

The two 10-year-old boys standing trial at the Old Bailey for allegedly raping the girl, then aged nine, are believed to be the youngest-ever rape defendants in Britain. They are also accused with two other boys, aged 10 and

11, of indecently assaulting the girl.

The prosecution case is that they dragged her into lavatories at their school, forcibly stripped her and then fondled her before three boys took it in turns to rape her as the others looked on and laughed.

A third boy alleged to have raped her could not be prosecuted as he was nine at the time and under the age of criminal responsibility.

At the start of yesterday's hearing, the girl told the court she had previously been raped and sexually attacked by a group of men in Jamaica. She said she was raped in the home of a man and three of his friends before she came to England four years ago. She spoke haltingly as she began her evidence.

She was being cared for by her aunt and grandmother in Jamaica while her mother was in England.

The court was not told how old the girl was at the time, but she said she was not attending school when a neighbour, aged about 30, took her to his house and raped and beat her.

She said: "He looked like he was mad."

Mr Kay, defending one of the boys, said: "Did the man harm you?" Looking down, the girl

whispered: "Yes, sometimes. Sometimes he took girls to his house."

Asked what the man did, she said: "He got his friends and they hurt us and after they hurt us he beat us and he hurt us with his finger and he slapped us round the face. He hit and hit us and beat us with sticks."

When it was repeatedly suggested by counsel that she had made the rape allegation up she said: "I told you everything I know and everything I remember and everything I did."

She told the jury: "I don't make up stories."

The accused sat with their legal teams and their families. One of the boys occupied the time during much of the cross-examination of his alleged victim by using a legal notepad to sketch reporters taking down the girl's evidence. Another sucked his thumb.

The morning session was adjourned early after the girl told the court: "I am getting upset because I am tired."

The girl again broke down just minutes after the court resumed for the afternoon.

Just 15 minutes into the session, the girl began crying, saying: "I'm tired."

The trial was adjourned until Monday.

My reputation is everything, Branson tells libel jury

Richard Branson told the High Court in London yesterday that he had brought his libel action because of the millions of people who put their trust in him.

The 47-year-old entrepreneur, who is suing a director of Camelot over an alleged bribe in the race to win the UK lottery franchise, said that in life "all you have is your reputation both personally and in business."

"In business I have literally millions of people who put their trust in me every year, who put their lives with me in flying on planes and going on trains and who invest their money with us. And I think people have to trust you. If there's ever any question mark over your integrity, I think it's very important that one defends that."

Mr Branson is suing Guy Snowden, the head of US lottery company Gtech - which holds 22 per cent of Camelot - and its PR director, Robert

Rendine, for claiming he made the bribery allegation when he knew there was insufficient evidence to support it.

Mr Snowden, 52, is alleged to have made the offer at a lunch at Mr Branson's home in Holland Park, west London, in September 1993 in an attempt to get the Virgin boss to withdraw his consortium's rival bid.

For his part, he is suing Mr Branson for making the allegation on a BBC *Panorama* programme in December 1995.

Mr Branson told Mr Justice Morland and the jury that the litigation was not another "Virgin product" aimed at commercial profit or publicity. "There is nothing to gain except getting the truth out."

He had issued his writs because he had been accused of being a liar "in the strongest possible terms". And he added: "I thought that was unpleasant and quite hurtful".

Cross examined by Richard Ferguson QC, for Mr Snowden, Mr Branson denied that he had "embellished" his account of what he claimed Mr Snowden had said to him in order to strengthen his case.

"There's nothing that needs strengthening in this case. I do not embellish things."

Mr Ferguson suggested that by the time the litigation was launched, Mr Branson had realised that the account of the conversation which he had written in a notebook on the day of the lunch was capable of a perfectly innocent explanation.

Mr Branson replied: "I had no difficulty whatsoever in remembering the words that Mr Snowden told me at that lunch. It was not every day that you get attempted to be bribed."

"I was absolutely and utterly clear about what Mr Snowden was saying to me."

The case continues.

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13/DESPATCHES

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998
13

Miners man the barricades in a losing battle against cuts

The coal miners of Asturias, in northern Spain, are demonstrating against government plans to cut subsidies to the industry. They fear that their jobs will go the same way as those of miners across Europe, as the once-mighty industry collapses.

Bienvenido Rodriguez, 46, a miner for more than half his life, hurried to the barricade in Figaredo just south of Mieres, the heartland of Asturian coalfields, where the pits have been strikebound since Boxing Day. He frowned as the sound of rubber bullets and smoke canisters fired by the Civil Guard cracked round the little town.

"We are very angry and frustrated. This used to be a rich, prosperous region. Now there's nothing. I can't tell you how many strikes I've fought. But I think this will be the last I'll see." Despite his militancy, Rodriguez, a member of the Workers' Commissions union, was pessimistic. "The government will win. They always do." He hacked a deep glaucous cough. "We've been losing battles for decades, and when

BY ELIZABETH NASH

we lose this one, our community will die." In what remains of Europe's publicly owned pits, the miners of Asturias are the last outpost of a once mighty force that fuelled the industrial revolution and invented the principle of workers' solidarity. Pioneers of militant trade unionism, they have made governments tremble for more than a hundred years.

In October 1934, when conservatives won elections in the short-lived Spanish republic, the Asturian miners rose up and declared a revolutionary soviet. They were the only workers to mount convincing strikes in the Sixties against the dictator Franco, who militarised the pits and forced the miners to the coalface at gunpoint. They fought their political allies, the ruling Socialists, in bitter struggles in 1991 against the closure of more than half the region's 23 pits. In a workforce 96 per cent unionised, strikers were so militant that they barricaded their own union executive in the pit over the Christmas of 1991. But that struggle, like all those of recent years, was defeated.

Yesterday morning, while the moon was still high, strikers strewed flaming pit props and upturned coal wagons across Asturias's spanking new motorway to Madrid for the 13th day running, trying to make the region a no-go area. At Figaredo, the Civil Guard riot squad pushed protesters back from the road, across the narrow-gauge railway that runs alongside it, and forced them up the slope opposite the station.

Throughout the morning they fired rubber bullets the size of golf balls and canisters of tear gas to keep the pickets at bay. The protesters, some masked with handkerchiefs, flung lumps of rock but these



Burning issue: Striking miners stand by a blazing barricade on a road in Asturias, northern Spain, where cuts threaten their livelihood Photograph: EPA

made little impact against the riot shields. Some of us took refuge in the station bar to escape the bitter smoke that stank of burning chicken feathers.

On Monday, a miner building a barricade died when a car hit him, and some yesterday wore black ribbons in mourning. Mounting tension all week increased when talks in Madrid between the miners' unions, the state coal company, Hunosa, and the government adjourned in the early hours of yesterday to resume on Thursday. Two miners were hurt and one arrested in actions yesterday throughout the coalfields which in many cases seem to have slipped the unions' control.

Asturian coal is of poorish quality, high in gases and sulphur, and pit machinery is outdated. As recently as 1995, 25 miners died in Dante-esque explosions of gas, the deadly mixture of methane and air, after warning systems failed. Coal from South Africa or Poland costs a sixth of what it costs to extract it from Asturias's complex, where facework is mostly still manual.

Hunosa employs some 10,000, compared with 18,500 ten years ago and 26,000 in 1967 when loss-making private pits were nationalised. It lost 45bn pesetas (£200m) last year, leading cynics to conclude that Hunosa would save money by closing the pits and

laying off the workforce on full salary. Consumers and industry meanwhile complain at the inflated cost of coal-fired electricity. The conservative Popular Party government wants to pull the plug and initially sought to withdraw the state subsidy by 2002.

Mobilisations in 1996 and pressure from PP-controlled regional authorities, who feared an explosion of social *griso* on their own doorstep, forced the government to grant a reprieve until 2005. Plans for Thatcher-style instant closures were quietly ruled out. None the less, vaunted projects for alternative employment came to nothing, and the other major industry, iron and steelmaking, closed down long ago.

In May, a deal was struck to cut coal output from 2.5m to 2.1m tons, give 4,000 workers early retirement, and issue some 1,000 new contracts by 2001. But the European Commission, ultimate provider of the subsidy, wants a cut to 1.5m tons and no new contracts, and the government now seeks to renegotiate. "Next Wednesday the ministers go to Brussels to get their orders before meeting us on Thursday," said Mr Rodriguez, with disgust. "We know we are losing, but we must fight to salvage as much as we can."

Miners' unions insist that, despite their reputation as hardliners, they want dialogue, and that the government has reneged on

its word. Luis Angel Vasquez Maseda, 36, on the executive of the Workers' Commissions mining federation, says: "We signed a deal with the government in May after 14 months of talks, agreeing a framework for negotiating a trauma-free reduction in subsidy. But now they want to reopen the whole thing. We want them to stick by the deal they signed in May."

Mr Vasquez Maseda, a *picador* (faceworker), went down the mine at 19. He has the taut, bulky shoulders of someone who has wielded the 6.5kg mechanical pick for 17 years. "You have to work with one hand, ... with the other you hold on to the wooden supports built up to the coalface above."

Solidarity, he says, emerged as a survival

mechanism. Miners looked out for each other because of the risks of instant death. "My father died in an accident at 49 in ... when did Franco die? Yes, 1975. When a neighbour is hurt, we are all hurt." But he, like others on the barricades, recognises that solidarity and militancy are not enough to defend jobs.

"We don't want to send our sons down the mine. But we worry because more than half our youngsters have no work. There is nothing. They'll live at home with dad, off his pension, and when he dies they'll pack their bags and go." So you face extinction? Mr Vasquez Maseda gave a level stare. "That's a strong word," he said after a pause. But he didn't disagree.

INDUSTRY IN DECLINE

In 1920, one and a quarter million British men worked down the pits. The figure today is only 18,000. This is not simply a British development. All over Europe mining industries are a fraction of the size they once were.

There are just over 100,000 miners in Western Europe now, a fifth of the number in 1970. Mechanisation reduced the need for staff, as did cheap foreign coal. Electricity companies, once major users of coal, turned to (much cheaper) gas to run their generators. Technological advance removed the need for coal to heat homes or support industry, much of which has changed from manufacturing to services.

In Spain, coal mining employs only half the number of people it did just seven years ago. France too has experienced a sharp decline in an industry in which several generations of a family could once be assured of a job.

The German coal industry had fared better until recent years, because of an agreement between the mining companies and the government, which did its best to ensure that pit closures would not lead to mass unemployment.

This seems to have succeeded: the unemployment rate in Germany 11 per cent, and is slightly lower in the mining areas. Germany now has the lion's share of Europe's miners, with 78,000, though this is projected to fall by a half by 2005.

Belgium has seen the end of its coal industry. In 1970 it employed 25,000 miners out of a population of about 8 million. All its pits are now closed. All the above figures include only those people who actually work as miners. "For every person employed in open-cast or colliery mines in Britain, there are another two working in support industries such as equipment manufacturing, driving and management," says Stewart Oliver of British mining giant RJB Mining.

This is a view supported by the European Solid Fuels Association, its director, Jean van der Stichele, said: "The total number of staff in mining, including surface people and clerks, is roughly one and a half or two times the number of miners." Even so, this means the total is about 250,000 throughout Europe; the same number as worked underground in Britain only 20 years ago. — Gidon Freeman

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OFF 2002

Montreal struggles out of a modern-day ice age

Eastern Canada is slowly returning to normal after a huge ice storm. Nearly a million people have been left without electricity, and thousands have been stranded.

Dazed Quebecers, no strangers to ferocious winters, are still shaking their heads in disbelief. Out of the blue, their normal, sophisticated 20th-century life has simply been suspended and they have been returned, literally, to the ice age.

At the worst stage, 3 million people, half the entire population of Quebec, were plunged into darkness and cold as the power system collapsed. Montreal, the second largest city in Canada, of more than 2 million inhabitants, became a ghost-town as the entire downtown commercial and business centre was suddenly blacked out. Thousands of office workers stumbling out in shock onto surreally dark streets found that the metro had also ground to a halt, its power shorted. For once, apocalyptic banner headlines reading "c'est l'enfer" ("it's hell") in local papers were entirely justified.

Now, 13 days after the start of the "storm of the century", life, at least in major urban areas, is slowly and patchily starting to return to a semblance of normality. But 350,000 households - more than a million people - in Quebec (and thousands more in New Brunswick and Eastern Ontario), are still without light, water or heat.

This is particularly serious as temperatures have plummeted to as low as minus 20C and tens of thousands have had to evacuate their freezing homes for temporary shelters in schools, gyms, synagogues and libraries, heated by generators - and they still don't know when they can return home. The devastation is awe-inspiring: some 600 giant transmission towers have crumpled like giant toys, while tens of thousands of broken pylons and electrical poles litter the snow-covered ground in every direction. Snapped, ice-encrusted cables trail and loop across roads still blocked with branches and trees that toppled under the sheer weight of the ice.

A freak five days of freezing rain coated power lines with up to four inches of ice, many times more weight than they could support. And as they collapsed and short-

ed, they overloaded other parts of the system which also blew, in a domino effect.

At one stage, four out of five links of the so-called "ring of power" surrounding Montreal, which supplies the city's electricity, collapsed. The entire city and surrounding area came within a hair's breadth of being blacked out, according to Lucien Bouchard, the Premier.

They have still not been repaired, making the whole system highly vulnerable, even though some temporary ancillary lines have now been hastily set up. But this fragility has meant that most businesses, factories and stores and all schools, universities and government offices have remained closed for a second week.

The Premier appealed to businesses to stay closed until last Thursday to prevent the system overloading (as happened again on Monday). Hydro-Quebec, the company that runs the power network, is still

BY SUSIE MORGAN

rationing electricity by "powershedding" (prolonged cuts), to conserve energy until more lines can be restored.

But by far the worst-affected area is Montreal's densely populated South Shore and areas further south, dubbed the "triangle of darkness", where thousands of households, and entire sizeable towns, are still cut off.

Nearly 10,000 Canadian troops have been drafted in to help with one of the country's worst natural disasters. General Maurice Baril, the armed forces chief, compared the scene of devastation on the South Shore to "Sarejevo without the bullets".

Hydro Quebec workers, battling round the clock to restore power with the help of the army and of American crews who have been called in from as far away as Connecticut, say the damage to electrical towers, pylons and power lines is so bad that the grid infrastructure will have to be completely rebuilt, rather than just repaired.

American workers battling in Arctic conditions say they are appalled at the conditions and at the extent of the damage. "I've

never in 40 years in this job seen anything like it," said one whose truck was practically covered with an American flag.

Now police and troops are making urgent door-to-door searches for people, especially the elderly, who are still staying in their freezing homes. They are trying to persuade them to leave for shelters, afraid of the very real danger of hypothermia in the savage cold (there have already been several deaths).

There are also grave dangers from carbon monoxide poisoning as people have been desperately trying to heat their homes with unsuitable devices like portable barbecues. Already an astounding 600 people have been hospitalised after falling ill from the insidious, odourless gas, and nine have died.

Meanwhile, the troops, the biggest number ever mobilised in peacetime, have been given police powers to patrol blacked-out evacuated areas to prevent looting and vandalism and to make arrests.

At times Montreal seems to be on a war footing - an impression reinforced by military helicopters landing uniformed troops in city suburbs and military trucks trundling down the snow and ice-clogged streets.

The sense of crisis is reinforced by daily live broadcasts by police, security and Hydro-Quebec officials, and by Premier Lucien Bouchard, giving crisis updates, warnings, advice, and help - and blanket coverage of the storm on television and radio which has totally taken over from normal programming.

Practical advice - helpline for those worst affected, and for the luckier citizens to donate blankets, food and provide beds and shelter - provides a real lifeline. So, too, do addresses for shelters and for cafés and restaurants offering free food and hot drinks, and hotels offering to put people up at cut rates.

Hearteningly, there has been a tremendous outpouring of sympathy and support - 15 offers for every one person needing a bed - and thousands are working as volunteers at shelters where, after nearly two weeks, people are exhausted, stressed, fractious and depressed. Some refugees house as many as 2,000 people, including children and even sometimes pets.

"I just want to go home," is the refrain heard everywhere, "but I can't and I don't know when I can".



A woman making her way past huge blocks of ice in downtown Montreal this week

Photograph: Paul Chasson/AP

Republicans in bid to repair rift as abortion returns to US agenda

Abortion is back on the US political agenda, with a damaging public split in the Republican Party and old arguments rekindled by the 25th anniversary of the judgment that made abortion a constitutional right. Even as the arguments rage, however, Mary Dejevis in Washington finds signs that the tide of opinion may be turning.

The National Committee of the Republican Party, which approves policy and controls funds, was set for a bitter debate at its annual meeting in California yesterday, the like of which had not been seen in years. The issue was whether party funds should be used to support election candidates who do not subscribe to the party's out-and-out opposition to "partial birth abortion" - a technique for late abortion that critics regard as a particularly cruel form of infanticide.

Party policy is to have the procedure outlawed and two bills have been passed by Con-

gress, only to be vetoed by President Clinton. Public opinion polls find that more than 80 per cent of Americans oppose the procedure. Pictures provided by lobbyists are gruesome.

A small minority of Congressmen and candidates on the liberal wing of the party, however, regard the hue and cry as the thin end of the anti-abortion wedge - a means of eventually drumming up enough support to remove women's right to abortion altogether - and steadfastly refuse to condemn it.

Last month, ardent foes of abortion petitioned the party's

National Committee to have these "dissidents" deprived of central campaign funds, a sanction that could would impair, if not ruin, their election prospects. With the mid-term congressional elections to be held this autumn, the sanction was a real threat.

The campaign got up a head of steam before the Republican Party leadership sounded the alarm. The result was an emergency propaganda blitz appealing for party unity-inclusion not exclusion.

They argued that making attitudes to partial birth abortion a "litmus test" for obtaining cen-

tral funds laid the party open to lobbying on other issues. How about a "litmus test" on other issues, like free trade? A litmus test for donors? There were whispers of Stalinism, democratic centralism and thought dictatorship. For the more traditional, patrician (and shrinking) wing of the party, there was the further consideration that abortion - even such a repellent practice as partial birth abortion - was a matter for individual conscience, not party politics.

Behind these objections, however, were other, practical, ones. A number of prominent

congressional and local Republican candidates could risk defeat, not only because of inadequate funding, but because in some constituencies "pro-choice" voters might switch to the rival Democrat. Unspoken was the further consideration that the women's vote - which already favours the Democrats - could decline further. By yesterday, with television advertisements calling for Republican "inclusiveness" still running, the funding motion was confidently expected to fail, but it was a close call.

This defeat, and the practical considerations behind it,

reinforced an impression that the vicious passion that has for so long fuelled the abortion debate in America may be starting to wane, along with the role of fundamentalist Christian movements in US politics.

Opinion polls conducted for the 25th anniversary of *Roe v Wade* - the Supreme Court ruling that gave US women the constitutional right, albeit limited, to an abortion - suggest something similar.

Although lobbyists on both sides use the polls, for their own reasons, to show that anti-abortion sentiment has hardened, this is not the whole story. The

polls also show solid public support for the view that abortion should be a legal right. In other words, increased public censure co-exists with acceptance - an acceptance that could not be taken for granted 25 years ago.

The anniversary of *Roe v Wade* falls next week, and lobbyists on both sides have been enthusiastically fighting the old fights. But the real fear that stalked abortion clinics seems recently to have dissipated. Abortion doctors were unworried enough about their safety to hold an anniversary dinner dance last weekend.

Bundestag allows Big Brother into German homes

Germany broke with a post-war taboo yesterday by legalising police bugging of private homes. The law authorising eavesdropping was passed by just over two thirds of the Bundestag, clearing by only four votes the hurdle laid down for constitutional amendments.

If approved by the second chamber, the Bundesrat, German police officers will have similar rights and obligations as their colleagues in other European countries. Permission for such measures will have to be approved by courts individually, and can only be granted if they serve an ongoing investigation into serious crimes.

The homes of priests, lawyers and MPs will continue to be immune to electronic surveillance. Doctors, tax advisers and journalists may be bugged, but a court must decide afterwards whether the information can be used.

Critics say the measure gives law enforcement authorities a way to introduce evidence from doctors and others who now have the right to refuse testimony. A journalists' union has threatened to challenge the measure in the Constitutional Court.

Although the wording of the law is the result of all-party discussions, serious reservations exist both on the left and the libertarian right. The previous Justice Minister, Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, resigned because she strongly disagreed with the proposed Bill.

The ban on bugging was one of the last vestiges of the 1949 constitution drawn up with the specific purpose of preventing a recurrence of Nazism. As a result of that Basic Law, Germans have tended to enjoy more protection from Big Brother than citizens of most democracies.

— Imre Karacs, Bonn



The greatest: Muhammad Ali receives the Commander of the Arch at King Hassan's palace

Photograph: AFP

Boxing champion Ali adds Morocco's top honour to his trophies

King Hassan II has awarded former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali one of Morocco's top honours. During a ceremony on Thursday night in the Moroccan capital Rabat, Ali also received a copy of a cassette recording of the Koran.

The order of the Commander of the Arch is one of Morocco's most prestigious.

Ali, 54, arrived in Morocco earlier this week to attend religious ceremonies and discussions in celebration of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. He also opened a friendly football match between Mo-

rocco and Angola by kicking the first ball.

During the four-day visit, Ali, founder of the charity Global Village Champion, was to visit several orphanages and humanitarian organisations which help children.

— AP, Rabat

Killing of Serb sours Croat takeover

A Croat man has been charged with murder after shooting dead a Serb in the eastern region which was returned to Croatia after two years' of United Nations administration. The shooting occurred hours before the Croatian government and the United Nations highlighted reconciliation between Serbs and Croats in the former Serb enclave and pledged to help the two communities live together again.

The 50-year-old man, identified only by the initials M.C., shot a Serb man in the chest with a Kalashnikov rifle on Wednesday night, a month after he threw a hand grenade into a cafe, killing another Serb. "For the first time he was charged with 'endangering public safety with fatal consequences'," a UN spokesman said, adding that the U.N. mission in Eastern Slavonia was concerned with the light sentence since he had intentionally thrown a hand grenade.

— Reuters, Vukovar

Italy gets back its ancient corpse

The frozen remains of a prehistoric man, believed to be the oldest mummy in the world, were returned to Italy, ending a six-year custody dispute with neighbouring Austria. The two nations have been squabbling over the 5,300-year-old corpse since 1991 when it was found by tourists on the Similaun glacier in the Oetz valley and whisked off first Innsbruck by a team of Austrian experts.

— Reuters, Bolzano

Fears grow over Belgian mass killings

Belgian police said the seven bodies found buried at the house of Andras Pandy did not include any of his missing family members, raising fears the death-toll could go as high as 13. Pandy, a Protestant pastor of Hungarian descent, has been accused of murdering two of his wives and four children and police were surprised when DNA showed none of the seven bodies found belonged to his family.

— AP, Brussels

Not-guilty plea at war-crimes court

A Bosnian Croat injured in a shoot-out with Nato troops last month pleaded not guilty to taking part in the killing of a Bosnian Moslem woman. Vlatko Kupreskic, who was wounded after opening fire on the Dutch troops who arrested him, was making his first appearance before judges of the U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

— Reuters, The Hague

Finnish PM to remarry

Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen will remarry this month to a long-time companion 25 years his junior. The 56-year old prime minister, whose daughter from his first marriage made him a grandfather last week, got engaged to history teacher Paivi Hertzberg, 31, on Christmas Eve.

— Reuters, Helsinki

15/PROMOTION

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998

Incredible flight offer: Europe from £34 return

easyJet

The Independent and Independent on Sunday, in association with easyJet are offering readers the chance to fly to Europe from an incredible £34 return or £22 one way (all prices include airport tax).

This offer is available between 21 February and 4 September 1998. Choose from Barcelona, Nice, Amsterdam, Geneva or Palma and in Scotland, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Inverness. Flights to all destinations are from London Luton, while you can also travel to Nice and Amsterdam from Liverpool airport as well.

If you live in Scotland you can fly from any of the Scottish airports mentioned above, to London Luton from £34 return (including airport tax).

The prices for travel are divided into three bands - travel between 21 February and 28 March are Band A, while travel between 29 March and 4 September is divided into peak, (Band C) and off peak (Band B). If you want to travel off peak then use the grid to advise you of the best times to fly.

The price grid shows the cost of a one way flight to each destination. If you choose to travel to a particular destination in band A, then you may find it is a different price to bands B or C.

How to book

Simply collect 12 differently numbered tokens from The Independent and Independent on Sunday (You must have 2 tokens from The Independent on Sunday, tokens will be printed until Friday 23 January). If you missed last week's tokens it is not too late to start collecting - we will be printing 2 tokens per day until Friday 23rd January.

Decide when and where you want to travel. You can book for up to five people with the one set of tokens as long as all passengers are travelling together. You can book up to two separate single or return journeys for up to 5 people - but each application must be accompanied by 12 differently numbered tokens.

On Saturday 24 January we will print a telephone number which you should use to book your flight.

You must book at least three weeks before you fly.

You will need to keep hold of your tokens as you will need to present them at the airport when you fly.

For more information call the special phone line 0870 60 60 737



Amsterdam: One of five European destinations available

Destinations and single flight prices including tax

DESTINATION	BAND A FEB 21 - MARCH 28 Outbound (£) Inbound (£)		BAND B MARCH 29 - SEPT 4 OFF-PEAK Outbound (£) Inbound (£)		BAND C MARCH 29 - SEPT 4 PEAK Outbound (£) Inbound (£)	
	Outbound (£)	Inbound (£)	Outbound (£)	Inbound (£)	Outbound (£)	Inbound (£)
Barcelona	22.00	12.00	34.50	24.50	39.50	29.50
Palma	22.00	12.00	29.50	19.50	44.50	34.50
Nice	22.00	14.70	24.50	17.20	39.50	32.20
Amsterdam	22.00	15.20	24.50	17.70	34.50	27.70
Geneva	22.00	19.00	24.50	21.50	34.50	31.50
Edinburgh	22.00	12.00	22.00	12.00	24.50	14.50
Aberdeen	22.00	12.00	22.00	12.00	24.50	14.50
Glasgow	22.00	12.00	22.00	12.00	24.50	14.50
Inverness	22.00	12.00	22.00	12.00	24.50	14.50

*Prices from London Luton and Liverpool are the same.

To calculate the return price add the outbound and inbound fares together.

Flights between 29 March and 4 September have different prices for peak and off-peak travel. If you want to travel off-peak, choose to travel at less popular times. This guide will help.

OFF-PEAK TIME ADVICE GUIDE

There are only very few off peak flights in July and August. Weekend flights will be very popular - be prepared to take alternative mid week flights.

If offer fares are not available at a particular time, a normal priced seat can be bought in conjunction with an offer seat.

There are no off-peak seats available on popular flights such as bank holiday weekends.

Here's more specific advice for more popular destinations

Barcelona: There are no off-peak flights in July or August.

Palma: July and August are especially popular.

Nice: Off-peak travel is only available in April.

Geneva: Saturday travel before Easter is especially popular.

Inverness: There is no off-peak travel in August.

Exclusions: You cannot fly with our offer during these times:

All destinations: 9-14 April; 1-4 May; 22-25 May; 28-31 August.

Liverpool-Nice: 2-4 March; 20-23 May; 14 June.

Nice-Liverpool: 4-6 March; 25-26 May; 16 June.

London Luton-Nice: 3-4 March; 20-23 May; 13-14 June.

Nice-London Luton: 24-26 May; 16 June.

London Luton-Edinburgh: 21-22 March.

Edinburgh-London Luton: 22-23 March.

London Luton-Barcelona: 7-10 May.

Barcelona-London Luton: 10-11 May.

You cannot travel on flights scheduled to depart after 2pm on Fridays and Sundays.

BAND A: FEBRUARY 21 - MARCH 28

LONDON LUTON - EDINBURGH		Edinburgh to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	0710 0825	0710 0825	0750
Saturday	0820 0935	0820 0935	1000
Sunday	1515 1625	1515 1625	1110
Mon-Friday	1825 1940	1825 1940	1755
Saturday	2100 2210	2100 2210	2110
Sunday	0820 0935	0820 0935	0750
Sunday	1715 1825	1715 1825	1110
Sunday	2025 2135	2025 2135	1845 1855
Sunday	1950 2105	1950 2105	1050
Sunday	1405 1520	1405 1520	1225 1235
Sunday	1725 1835	1725 1835	1540 1555
Sunday	2035 2145	2035 2145	1855 2005

LONDON LUTON - PALMA		Palma to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1715
Saturday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1715
Sunday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1715

LONDON LUTON - NICE		Nice to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	0705 1005	0705 1005	1155
Saturday	0805 1055	0805 1055	1200
Sunday	0705 1005	0705 1005	1155
Sunday	1220 1520	1220 1520	1710
Sunday	1240 1540	1240 1540	2030
Sunday	1255 1555	1255 1555	1715
Sunday	1745 2045	1745 2045	2235

LONDON LUTON - GLASGOW		Glasgow to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	0815 0930	0815 0930	0745
Saturday	1515 1630	1515 1630	1105
Sunday	1835 1950	1835 1950	1805
Mon-Friday	2130 2245	2130 2245	2010 2120
Saturday	0815 0930	0815 0930	0745
Sunday	1830 1945	1830 1945	1105
Sunday	1045 1200	1045 1200	1015
Sunday	1740 1855	1740 1855	1220 1230
Sunday	2055 2210	2055 2210	1915 2025

LONDON LUTON - INVERNESS		Inverness to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1135 1305	1135 1305	1445
Saturday	1510 1620	1510 1620	1710
Sunday	1510 1620	1510 1620	1710

LONDON LUTON - BARCELONA		Barcelona to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1030 1335	1030 1335	1245
Saturday	0745 1050	0745 1050	1250
Sunday	0830 1140	0830 1140	1255
Sunday	1740 2045	1740 2045	2240

LIVERPOOL - AMSTERDAM		Amsterdam to Liverpool	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1910 2130	1910 2130	1305
Saturday	1800 1820	1800 1820	0935 0955
Sunday	1840 1900	1840 1900	0955 1015

LONDON LUTON - ABERDEEN		Aberdeen to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1445
Saturday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1445
Sunday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1445

LONDON LUTON - AMSTERDAM		Amsterdam to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1445
Saturday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1445
Sunday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1445

LONDON LUTON - GENEVA		Geneva to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	0710 0950	0710 0950	1110
Saturday	0710 0950	0710 0950	1110
Sunday	0710 0950	0710 0950	1110

LIVERPOOL - NICE		Nice to Liverpool	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1715
Saturday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1715
Sunday	1140 1305	1140 1305	1715

BAND B/BAND C: MARCH 29 - SEPTEMBER 4

LONDON LUTON - EDINBURGH		Edinburgh to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	0715 0824	0715 0824	0745
Saturday	0815 0924	0815 0924	0958
Sunday	1509 1615	1509 1615	1059
Mon-Friday	1820 1930	1820 1930	1750
Saturday	2125 2235	2125 2235	2100
Sunday	0815 0925	0815 0925	0745
Sunday	2125 2235	2125 2235	1058
Sunday	1025 1134	1025 1134	0845 0955
Sunday	1811 1921	1811 1921	1204 1315
Sunday	2125 2235	2125 2235	1440 1550

LONDON LUTON - PALMA		Palma to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1025 1351	1025 1351	1605
Saturday	0807 0920	0807 0920	1015 1150
Sunday	0807 0920	0807 0920	1015 1150
Sunday	1220 1545	1220 1545	1810
Sunday	1240 1565	1240 1565	2050
Sunday	1255 1570	1255 1570	1810
Sunday	1745 2045	1745 2045	2255

LONDON LUTON - AMSTERDAM		Amsterdam to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	0720 0930	0720 0930	1000
Saturday	1033 1237	1033 1237	1917
Sunday	1417 1638	1417 1638	2233
Sunday	1128 1330	1128 1330	2101 2109
Sunday	1838 2041	1838 2041	2237 2248
Sunday	0834 1137	0834 1137	1808 1810
Sunday	1345 1548	1345 1548	2056 2058

LONDON LUTON - BARCELONA		Barcelona to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1300 1505	1300 1505	0810
Saturday	1847 2055	1847 2055	1645 1757
Sunday	0908 1215	0908 1215	0839
Sunday	1437 1744	1437 1744	1407
Sunday	2010 2318	2010 2318	1849
Sunday	0910 1215	0910 1215	0840
Sunday	1438 1744	1438 1744	1408
Sunday	2009 2309	2009 2309	1841

LONDON LUTON - GLASGOW		Glasgow to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	0814 0927	0814 0927	0744
Saturday	1458 1612	1458 1612	1058
Sunday	1817 1928	1817 1928	1247
Mon-Friday	2130 2240	2130 2240	1948 2058
Saturday	0814 0927	0814 0927	0744
Sunday	2130 2244	2130 2244	1059
Sunday	1240 1345	1240 1345	0800 1011
Sunday	1832 1943	1832 1943	1405 1517
Sunday	2157 2308	2157 2308	2000 2115

LONDON LUTON - AMSTERDAM		Amsterdam to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	0720 0930	0720 0930	1000
Saturday	1033 1237	1033 1237	1917
Sunday	1417 1638	1417 1638	2233
Sunday	1128 1330	1128 1330	2101 2109
Sunday	1838 2041	1838 2041	2237 2248
Sunday	0834 1137	0834 1137	1808 1810
Sunday	1345 1548	1345 1548	2056 2058

LIVERPOOL - AMSTERDAM		Amsterdam to Liverpool	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1947 2201	1947 2201	1305
Saturday	1853 2207	1853 2207	1305 1315
Sunday	1851 2208	1851 2208	1157 1215

LIVERPOOL - NICE		Nice to Liverpool	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1947 2201	1947 2201	1305
Saturday	1853 2207	1853 2207	1305 1315
Sunday	1851 2208	1851 2208	1157 1215

LONDON LUTON - ABERDEEN		Aberdeen to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1128 1249	1128 1249	1429
Saturday	1128 1249	1128 1249	1429
Sunday	1128 1249	1128 1249	1429

LONDON LUTON - INVERNESS		Inverness to London Luton	
Day of travel	Dep. Arr.	Day of travel	Dep. Arr.
Mon-Friday	1128 1249	1128 1249	1429
Saturday	1128 1249	1128 1249	1429
Sunday	1128 1249	1128 1249	1429

How the flying pigs became a crackling good tale

Even *Thought For The Day* caught swine fever. The subject for Radio 4's religious slot yesterday was the fugitive Tamworth pigs whose fate, a worthy godslot contributor informed us, has gripped the imagination of the nation.

Excuse me. Yes, I know that the august *Guardian* yesterday used the same phrase on its front page, and without apparent irony. The tabloid papers have given over page after page to the subject. *News at Ten* has revelled in a story which might have been tailor-made for its "And Finally..." slot. And there's the rub. But before we come to that, for those readers

BY PAUL VALLELY

who have today returned from holiday in a less sentimental clime, here is the story so far.

Nine days ago two Ginger Tamworth pigs escaped as they were being transferred from a van into an abattoir yard in Malmesbury. They ran round the yard before forcing their way through a hole in the fence and ran off across the road into the fields opposite. Confronted by the barrier of the River Avon, they dived into the icy waters and swam to freedom. They then went to ground in the gardens of the town.

Their owner, a council road sweeper with the improbable name of Arnaldo Dijulio, who had reared them for slaughter on his smallholding, tried to catch them, as did other locals, but they ran off with a surprising turn of speed whenever anyone tried to get hold of them.

So much for the facts. Had it been France, Germany or Italy, or more especially the United States, someone would then have got a gun and shot them. There would have been no news.

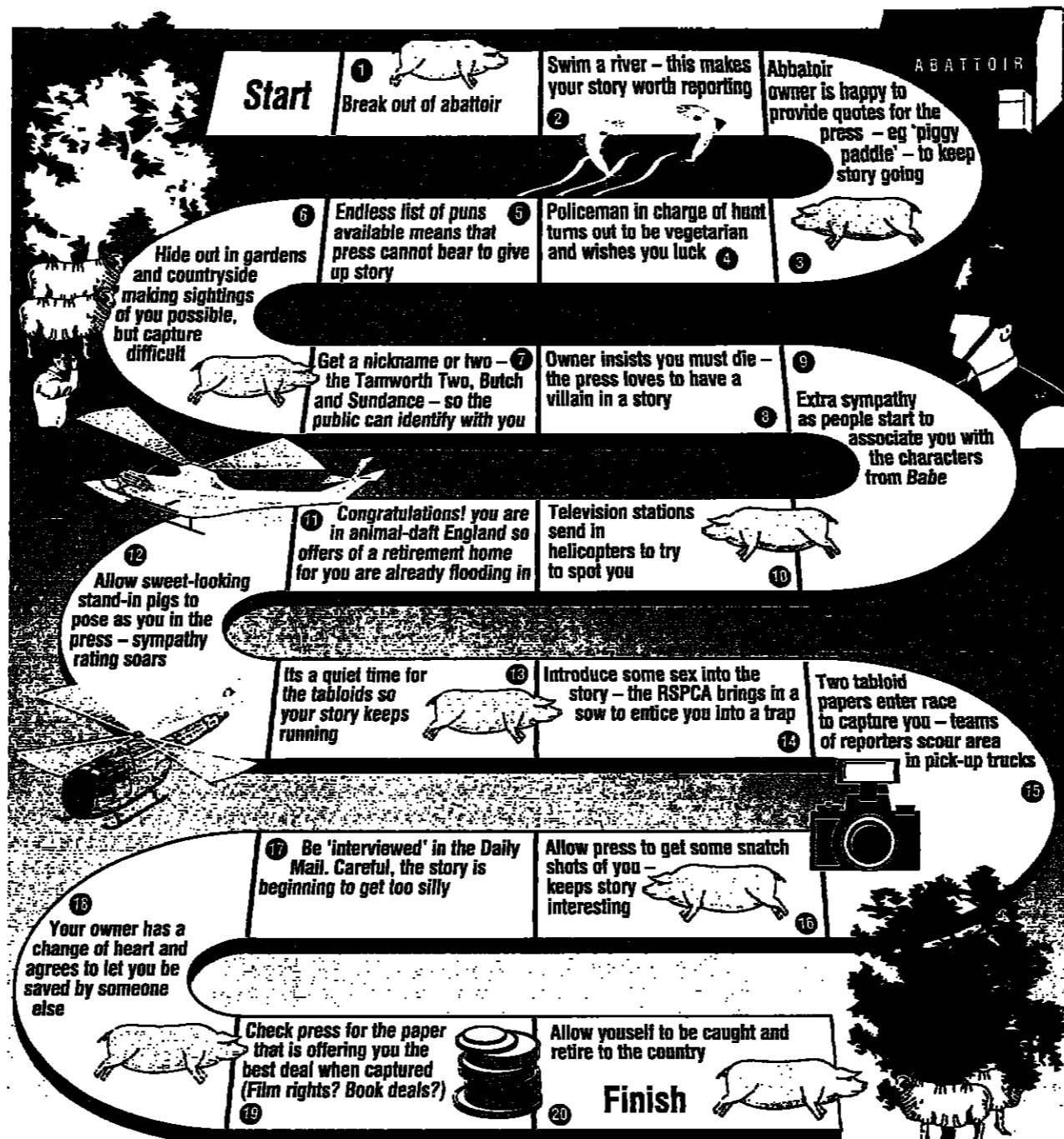
But this is Britain. When reports filtered through to London teams of newshounds were dispatched. They chased the unhappy animals on foot, by car, in hired four-wheel drives. ITN even sent a helicopter. The pigs were variously named - Fred and Ginger, Babe and Algy, Butch and Sundance and, more universally, the Tamworth Two.

The papers and the local RSPCA office proclaimed themselves to be inundated with calls from people offering money to save the beasts. A mystified Mr Dijulio suddenly found himself being offered as much as £15,000 for his pigs which the week before would have fetched him £40 a piece.

The tabloids filled double-page spreads with terrible puns: "Squeal meet again" said hacks who declared themselves to be "on the pig's tail" in an attempt to capture the "cheeky swine" and then take them to an animal sanctuary where the might live "high on the hog". And on it went, liberally illustrated with photos of "Ginger Tamworths, like the one above".

The broadsheets carried more discursive pieces, sprinkled with references to George Orwell and Lord Emsworth but nonetheless managed to fill prodigious amounts of column inches. The men on the telly, deprived at first of actual pictures of their prey and forced to create their own images where none existed, resorted to codding up "great white hunter" scenes in which reporters, equipped with metaphorical stout stick, felt the temperature of the spoor freshly imprinted in the ground.

Dog bites man, you will recall, is no story in the British news lexicon. But this was pig



The grunt escape - or how to avoid the chop by becoming a media star

bites man, putatively at any rate for, as the papers kept informing us, the Tamworth Ginger could give you a nasty nip.

What is it about the British and animals? For we have been

here before. Remember Blackie the Donkey? He was rescued by the *Sun* from cruel Spaniards who wanted to kill him in 1987 in an annual ritual to mark the execution of a

rapist centuries ago, and then pinched by the *Daily Star* which took him to join 7,000 others in the Donkey Sanctuary in Sidmouth, Devon. Then there was the rabbit saved by an intrepid

Mail on Sunday reporter who ventured into the lair of Colonel Gaddafi to recover the pet, which had been abandoned when diplomats quit the British embassy during one of those

Libyan crises (we forget the crisis, you see, but not the rabbit).

I have, I must confess, forgotten the name of the Tripoli bunny. Which is probably why I am back on rabbit pie. "Once an animal has been given a name, it is difficult to eat it," according to Julia Berryman, a psychologist at Leicester University who has made a study of people's attachment to animals. "Pets [except goldfish] are invariably named, and you form a relationship with them," she said. So close that one third of pet-owners, her research shows, have a closer relationship with their pet than their spouse. "These pigs have stepped out of line. They have crossed over from being farm animals to companions. They have been given names. Once that happens you can't reverse the process."

This explains something of our ambivalence about creatures which one minute are just potential bacon sandwiches and the next have become stars. It was a swift transformation. The day that we first heard of the pigs we were, elsewhere in our newspapers, continuing to regard the pigs and Wiltshire in an altogether different light.

Wiltshire, you may recall, is at the centre of the row between the British and Italians over whether Parma ham, the most upmarket transmutation a pig can undergo, can legitimately be sliced in Wiltshire. The Parma Ham Consortium is seeking an injunction to prevent Asda from selling its meat cured in Parma but sliced and packaged in Chippenham. They might be better off just giving the hams cute little nicknames.

It goes further than that. We give them not just names, but personalities. Anthropomorphism has been a British weakness since the three little pigs first went to market. Small wonder that the device surfaced again this week. The *Evening Standard* printed the first "exclusive interview" with the Tam-

worth Two clad in dark glasses. The *Daily Mail* carried a wince-making "world exclusive" - complete with invented quotes which had they been from a person his editor would have wanted "improved". Even the *Times* printed a piece with pig quotes prefaced with expletives like "Pheew".

There were those who were not amused. "It's fantastically hypocritical," said Rev Professor Andrew Linzey, Fellow of Mansfield College, Oxford, who holds Britain's first academic post in animal theology. "Five hundred million animals are slaughtered every year and are treated with hideous cruelty - pigs have their teeth clipped with metal pliers and their tails pulled off."

But it's not the tabloids he blames, so much as Aristotle. "He was the first to say animals are there for our use, and then the idea came into Christianity via Thomas Aquinas who conceived an intellectual hierarchy from angels, men, women, animals and plants."

Such priorities became embedded in English culture and law. In the Seventies, Amnesty International financed experiments to torture pigs to find out whether certain kinds of torture could be used without damaging skin. In the 1980s, a man charged with cruelty to prawns successfully argued in court that they weren't sentient beings (he had thrown the live crustaceans on a hot plate and watched them jump). More recently the Nuffield Committee on xenotransplantation decided that it was ethical to use pigs for organ transplants but not primates like monkeys and apes because they were too close to human beings.

The Tamworth Two, both back in custody last night, were originally part of a three-pig group when they entered the abattoir. The third animal was, according to the butcher, "processed in the usual way." If only he'd had a name.

MINOTEL
Great Britain

INDEPENDENT
ON SATURDAY

CITY BREAK QUESTIONNAIRE

FIVE LAKES
Hotel, Golf & Country Club

WIN A MINOTEL OR FIVE LAKES WEEKEND BREAK



Herald House Hotel



Five Lakes Hotel Golf and Country Club

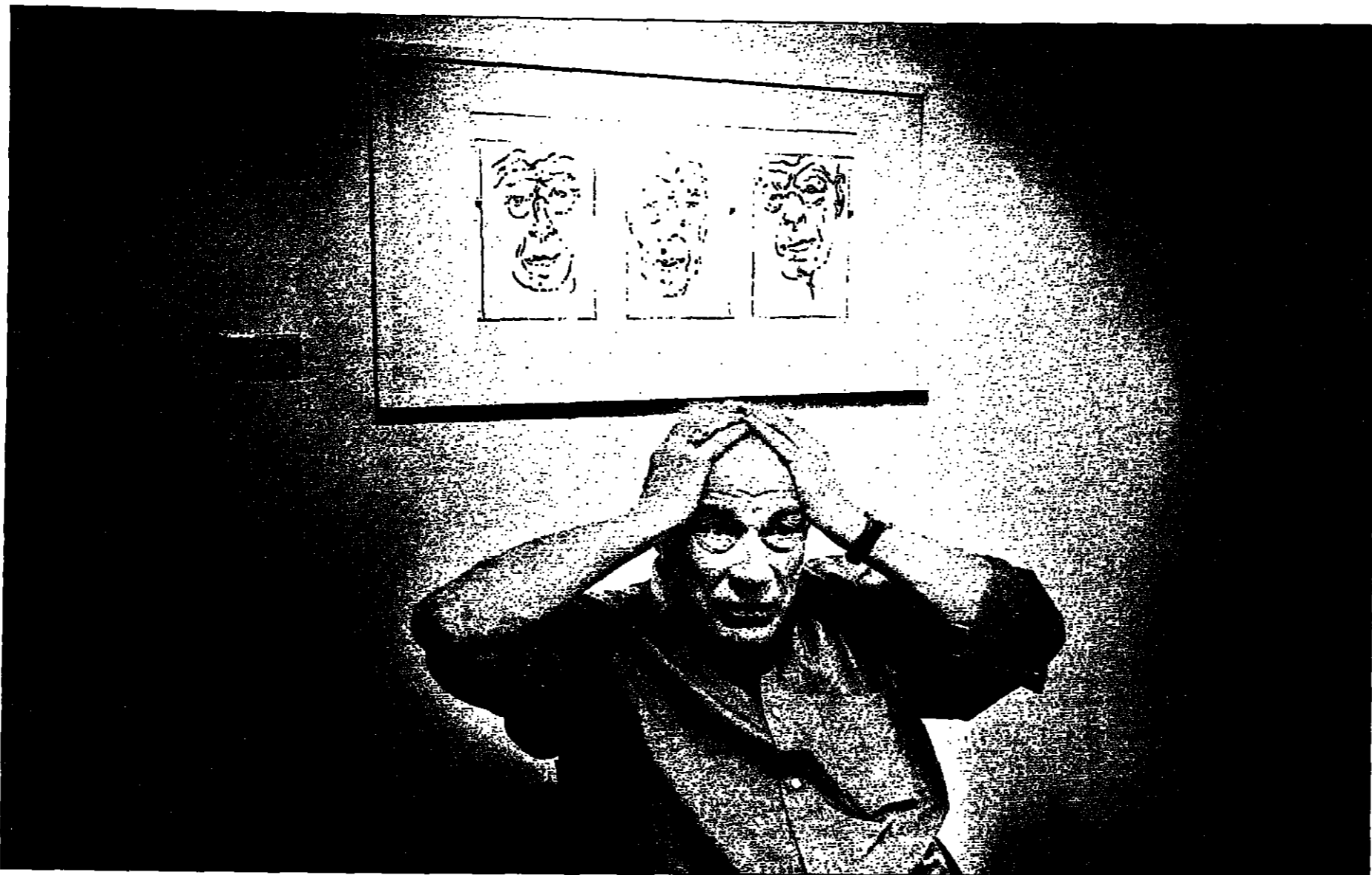
Dear Reader,

Have you been on a city break in the last 12 months? If so, then we would like to hear from you.

By filling in the questionnaire you have the chance to win a UK City Break at one of the following hotels: Five Lakes Hotel, Golf & Country Club, Maldon, Essex, are offering a two night 'Pamper time' stay in an en-suite room with English breakfast. The pampering includes massage, facial and manicure with an evening meal from the table d'hôte in the award winning Camelot restaurant. Or have a weekend break in the Minotel Herald House Hotel in a double or twin room with a full English breakfast where you can take advantage of their courtyard bar and acclaimed restaurant. The hotel is situated in the heart of Edinburgh only a few minutes walk from Princes Street. Offers are based on two people sharing and subject to availability and confirmation by the hotel. Winners to be drawn at random.

Please send your completed questionnaire to: City Break Questionnaire, Freepost 13583, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5DL, to arrive no later than 31st January 1998.

<p>1. How many city breaks holidays in the UK have you had in the last 12 months (excluding visits to family and friends)?</p> <p>None (go to Q3) 5) 0 Three 3 One 1 Four+ 4 Two 2</p>		<p>8. Regarding your choice of accommodation, how would you rate the following in order of importance, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important?</p> <p>Price/deal 14) 1 2 3 4 5 Picture in brochure/paper 15) 1 2 3 4 5 Type of hotel 16) 1 2 3 4 5 Location 17) 1 2 3 4 5 Facilities 18) 1 2 3 4 5 Other 19) 1 2 3 4 5</p>		<p>13. Which of the following do you use for information about what to do on your city break?</p> <p>Guide book 25) 1 Tourist information 2 Newspaper articles 3 Advice from friends 4 Television holiday programmes 5 Other - please state 8</p>		<p>ABOUT YOU</p> <p>Sex 34) Male 1 Female 2 Age 35) 15-24 1 45-54 4 25-34 2 35-44 5 35-44 3 65+ 6</p>																								
<p>2. And which cities in the UK did you stay in?</p> <p>London on 1 occasion 6) 1 Cardiff 7) 1 London on 2+ occasions 2 Edinburgh 2 Bath 3 Leeds 3 Birmingham 4 Oxford 4 Brighton 5 Manchester 5 Bristol 6 Stratford 6 Cambridge 7 York 7 Canterbury 8 Other - please state 7-8</p>		<p>9. What was the cost in total per person?</p> <p>£50 or under 20) 1 £251-£350 4 £51-£150 2 £351+ 5 £151-£250 3</p>		<p>14. Have you ever been on any of the following holidays within the UK in the last 12 months?</p> <p>Health farm 26) 1 Golf 3 Boating 2 Murder mystery 4 Other 3</p>																										
<p>3. How many city break holiday abroad have you had in the last 12 months (excluding visits to family and friends)?</p> <p>None (go to Q5) 8) 0 Three 3 One 1 Four+ 4 Two 2</p>		<p>10. What was the main method of transport to your last city break destination?</p> <p>Own car 21) 1 Rail 4 Hired car 2 Air 5 Ferry/hovercraft 3 Coach 6 Other - please state 8</p>		<p>15. Have you ever responded to any advertising in The Independent or Independent on Sunday regarding a holiday?</p> <p>27) Yes 1 No 2</p>																										
<p>4. Which cities abroad did you visit?</p> <p>Amsterdam 9) 1 New York 10) 1 Barcelona 2 Paris 2 Berlin 3 Prague 3 Dublin 4 Rome 4 Madrid 5 Venice 5 Other - please state 8</p>		<p>11. From the following list choose the three most important factors influencing your choice of city destination.</p> <p>Price 22) 1 Museums/places of historic interest 2 Nightclubs 3 Shopping 4 Theatres/shows 5 Restaurants/food 6 Distance from home 7 Country 8 Recommendations from friends 9 Newspaper article 23) 1 TV programme 2 An event in the city 3 Other - please state 8</p>		<p>16. Which of the following national quality newspapers do you read during the week (ie. Monday-Friday) and on a Saturday?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mon-Fri</th> <th>Sat</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Daily Telegraph 28) 1</td> <td>29) 1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Financial Times 2</td> <td>2</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Guardian 3</td> <td>3</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Independent 4</td> <td>4</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Times 5</td> <td>5</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			Mon-Fri	Sat	Daily Telegraph 28) 1	29) 1		Financial Times 2	2		The Guardian 3	3		The Independent 4	4		The Times 5	5								
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<p>5. Thinking about the last city break you took, was it in the UK or abroad?</p> <p>UK 11) 1 Abroad 2</p>		<p>17. And which of the following quality Sunday newspapers do you read almost always (A/A), quite often (Q/O), only occasionally (O/O) or never?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th></th> <th>A/A</th> <th>Q/O</th> <th>O/O</th> <th>Never</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Independent on Sunday 30) 1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Observer 31) 2</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sunday Telegraph 32) 3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sunday Times 33) 4</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </table>			A/A	Q/O	O/O	Never	Independent on Sunday 30) 1	1	1	1	1	Observer 31) 2	2	2	2	2	Sunday Telegraph 32) 3	3	3	3	3	Sunday Times 33) 4	4	4	4	4	<p>THANK YOU</p> <p>Please fill in your details if you are entering the competition.</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>Postcode _____</p> <p>Evening telephone number _____</p> <p>Please tick the box if you would not be willing to help us with any research in the future. <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>For your free copy of Minotel GB and Ireland Guide, plus a 10% discount voucher: Send your name and address, marking your request "The Independent" to Minotel GB Ltd, 37 Springfield Road, Blackpool, Lancs, FY1 2PZ.</p>	
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Sunday Telegraph 32) 3	3	3	3	3																										
Sunday Times 33) 4	4	4	4	4																										
<p>6. How many nights did you spend away?</p> <p>1-2 12) 1 5+ 3 3-4 2</p>		<p>12. How did you book your last city break?</p> <p>Through a travel agent 24) 1 Teletext 2 Telephone direct to company 3 Through a newspaper 4 Through a magazine 5 Other - please state 8</p>		<p>7. And what type of accommodation did you stay in?</p> <p>4-5 star hotel 13) 1 Self catering 4 2-3 star hotel 2 Bed and breakfast 5 1 star hotel 3 Youth hostel 6 Other - please state 8</p>																										



Seeking the invisible: John Berger poses before 'Face Writing', a triple self-portrait. 'With images of faces,' he says, 'what one looks for is to make that face also a place' - in this case, Inch Kenneth in the Hebrides

Photograph: Rui Xavier

John Berger: ways of seeing, ways of biking

For well-nigh half a century, John Berger - poet, essayist, critic, novelist, playwright, veteran guru of the left - has taught us new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing the world. So what is he doing now? Drawing motorbikes. He tells Andrew Lambirth the reason why.

A compact, energetic figure with white hair, John Berger will be 72 this year. He was born in Stoke Newington, North London, but for 30 years he has lived abroad, and now makes his home in a village in the French Alps. He is hesitant in conversation; you feel that he is weighing every word, searching for the *mot juste*. There is the parallel sensation that he is translating from another language - French? - as he speaks. At one point he says: "freedom, but not with a capital L" (as, presumably, in *Liberte*), before quickly correcting himself. His "no" reverts to a "non" at times of emphasis.

His apparent shyness is no doubt a mask for his sensitivity - the sensitivity that permits him to respond so intricately to works of art, people and places. His seriousness is matched by a willing sense of humour; Berger has a warm presence; he is charming and courteous. Yet there is also a reserve; you sense a hidden, private core to the man, which may or may not be serene.

Today, John Berger is perhaps best known as a Booker Prize-winning writer of fiction, yet even those whose eyes were opened by his extraordinary 1972 TV series, *Ways of Seeing*, may not be aware that he began life as an artist, training first at the Central School, where he stayed for almost two years before going into the army. Demobbed in 1946, he continued his interrupted education at Chelsea School of Art. There were good teachers on the staff: Robert Medley, Geri Richards, Henry Moore, Julian Trevelyan. At that point

Berger saw himself as pursuing a life in art. He had some success in group exhibitions, then in 1953 he was given a solo show at Wildenstein's of some 15 or 20 paintings, nearly all of which are now dispersed to the winds. The Wildenstein show was his last in England until this week. He returns now to the gallery circuit with 14 recent drawings, showing at Purdy Hicks, near the new Tate at Bankside. A modest show, but full of interest, and highly typical of the man.

I am interviewing him in the gallery, and we return to the story of his development. What does he think now of the paintings of that early period? He frowns. "Several things. First of all, that they are often quite clumsy. And then, almost the opposite: that they could be freer, that they're a bit constricted. But I can also see in them, somewhere struggling behind that restrictiveness, a kind of passion, which I can recognise perhaps as mine."

It was in 1953, too, that Berger stopped practising as an artist. Not that he stopped drawing altogether, but being an artist now took second place to writing, and drawing became simply an activity he undertook from time to time. "Like a diary?" I ask. "No, it was either more functional than that, or more relational. Either I drew because I saw something and wanted to remember it for some quite definite purpose, or I would draw something which I thought would help me with my writing. Sometimes I would draw portraits of people I was inventing in a book, or portraits of intimate friends. I've always done that - it's not really a question of making a portrait but of trying to follow the traces of their lives, which are somehow visible in their hands or in their faces."

Despite, or perhaps because of, his need for precision of expression, Berger notoriously finds writing difficult, and turns to drawing almost for light relief. He makes no big claims for his new exhibition, but he's always been keen to put on record the various as-

pects of his creativity - whether essays, criticism, plays, poetry, photographs or fiction. The drawings, mostly in charcoal or ink, are clearly important to him, but he remains modest about them. "About four or five years ago, I began to draw more and more. And then I realised something. For 35 or 40 years, I really wasn't drawing very much. One would suppose that, if one then went back to it, one would more or less go back to where one had stopped. But I found surprisingly that, during those mute years, things had gone on de-

'It was the height of the Cold War, we were living under threat of nuclear war... In that situation, to draw and paint seemed not urgent enough'

veloping, there had been an evolution. So I was actually further on."

So why did he give up art for literature? "The creative choices that one makes in a life are much more incoherent and compulsive than one pretends afterwards. It wasn't really because I became discouraged about myself as a painter. No. Of course I had days of despair, as everybody does, but that hadn't overburdened me. It was the height of the Cold War - 1952, '53, '54 - we were living under the imminent threat of nuclear war. It seemed that one really had to protest in order to make this terminal catastrophe even slightly less likely. In that situation, to draw and paint seemed not urgent enough. Of course, one could have made posters and agitprop, but it's not something I ever did."

"I had a certain capacity to write. I discovered that when I was a kid at school. I wrote poems, letters... It became possible

for me to become a journalist, and I could talk directly about the nuclear threat and the political choices. So it was a kind of urgent, somewhat desperate politicisation which led me to begin writing. Having done that I began to see that it was difficult to combine these two activities. Painting has to be a full-time activity. You really have to be covered with this material that you're working with, whether it's paint or clay. So I then decided that, rather than be a one-handed painter, it was better to stop."

Berger was the feared and respected art critic of *The New Statesman* for a decade (1952-62), writing in favour of social (not socialist) realism, a logical extension of his commitment to Marxism. He also wrote other journalism, but it was not long before he felt the urge to go beyond reporting the immediate, and explore fiction. His first novel, *A Painter of Our Time*, published in 1958, is primarily about painting. The book has an experimental and slightly didactic feeling to it, and is based on a group of people, many of them émigrés from Central and Eastern Europe, who lived in the Finchley Road area. Berger says that if anyone inspired the observations on painting in the book it was a Dutch artist and close friend, Friso Ten Holt, who in fact died the week before our interview. Ten Holt also had a motorbike, a BSA, and made a number of journeys by bike with Berger. This is not as irrelevant as it sounds: from an early age, Berger has been passionate about motorbikes, and still rides one. Three of the drawings in this exhibition are about the experience of biking.

It is a subject Berger is convinced he will return to. "This is really just the beginning," he says. Two drawings feature a biker traversing a printed map. I ask whether this is Berger in conceptual mode. "They're not drawings about motorbikes; they're about the experience of riding a bike. I was working on the series, fiddling around, when suddenly I had the idea of drawing on a map. Then I began to see something which is not

so much conceptual as phenomenological, to do with experience. The contours on a map, the rivers, the roads, the mountain ranges, begin to make a metaphor with the body of the motorbiker and the bike. In a strange way you become the journey that you've made, until the next one. You eat it and you spit it out: it passes through you."

We look together at other drawings in the gallery. One, *O Betanzos*, depicts a small town in Galicia, northern Spain. "It was a very poor town, from which thousands of emigrants left for Cuba and Latin America... I went there several summers; I love this place. I did several drawings, always with this obsession that Betanzos was a town which people left, so the drawing is about memory."

A triptych called *Face Writing*, done in ink on the pages of a Chinese notebook of absorbent paper, is a series of three self-portrait heads drawn with spidery economy. "With images of faces, what one looks for is to make that face also a place, a specific place," he means, in terms of where it was drawn - Inch Kenneth, in the Hebrides. And that's all the information that Berger thinks necessary to impart.

As visitors to his exhibition, our primary job is to look, not to sniff out autobiography. There are drawings of fish, made partly from Berger's interest in movement. Their particular appeal? "I suppose it is the fantastic intricacy of these creatures... There are two things about fish: their speed, which is expressed in their forms, and that their lives are incredibly secret. Except when you glimpse them through the water, or they're dead, you never see fish. And it seems to me that so much drawing and painting is finally about seeking the invisible."

'Drawings by John Berger' is at Purdy Hicks, 65 Hopton Street, London SE1 (0171-401 9229) until 31 January. 'Pages of the Wound', a limited edition of Berger's selected poems, photographs and drawings (John Christie at Circle Press, £270), is on sale at the gallery.

The wispy little man behind the big Bronx novel

Don DeLillo
Congress House

That small sense of *déjà vu* perhaps: a crowd of 500 packed into TUC headquarters to hear Don DeLillo, scion of Italian immigrants from the Bronx, talk a lot of fiction. The publishers had described it as the literary event of the decade. It cost £3.50 a head, and was on the No 7 bus route.

At the end of the evening, in exchange for a voluntary levy of approximately £15, many walked away with living proof that they had been there - a novel, *Underworld*, weighing in at approximately 2 kilos, together with a spidery signature of authenticity.

Many in that crowd were PhD students - the girl sitting next to me was 80,000 words into a doctorate on the post-modern American novel. She'd approached the subject through cybernetics at first, she said, but her supervisor at Birkbeck had suggested a slightly different approach - through noise theory. This was why she'd read DeLillo's *White Noise*. It was the only one of his books she'd read. It had been very interesting, she said.

At exactly the moment when anticipation reached fever pitch, the Waterstone's marketing manager walked on stage to tell us how to queue for the book-signing at the end, and to remind us that it might be embarrassing if the book hadn't been purchased first. Mr DeLillo was not in the habit of signing paper serviettes or merely handing out easy smiles, not these days. Then an oozy American literary editor from the *New York Observer* hit the podium running, with enough ridiculous hyperbole to make an author break down in tears of gratitude. No wonder DeLillo, when he came booming across the stage like a kangaroo, looked contented. He even flicked the Lit Ed on the back of the neck with the cutting edge of his manuscript to show that he was being really pally.

The Birkbeck PhD already knew what DeLillo would be like - small and wispy, with a heavy lip. More private citizen than literary hero. And so it was. He treated us to 35 minutes of readings from the book, a kaleidoscope of literary images: the wonderful, fast repartee of a couple of Bronx butchers; kids smashing up a carriage on the Elevated Railroad; taking the sun on the roof of an apartment building in the Fifties, the tar melting in the heat.

DeLillo knew that it was going to be a long book after he'd written the 20,000-word opening sequence, a description of a legendary ballgame between the Giants and the Dodgers, set in 1951. Somewhere within that sequence, a single sentence is buried describing a kid on a Bronx roof, listening to that game on the radio.

That kid, Nick Shay, would become the central character of the panoramic view of the Cold War era that the 800-page novel grew into over four years. Enough to keep any post-doctoral student of American literature gainfully employed for at least two lifetimes.

Michael Glover

THE WEEK ON RADIO ROBERT HANKS

The past is unfashionable right now: cutting ourselves off from our roots, drawing a line under things, modernising, reinventing - that's what we like doing. That old stuff, tradition and so forth, it's a bit passé now, isn't it?

Living Ideas, this week's *Postscript* series on Radio 3, was based on the positively nerdy belief that history isn't so easily got rid of; you think you've wiped it off your shoes, but the smell clings. Four contemporary thinkers argued the relevance of their predecessors to the world we live in, starting with the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who put the case for "Stoic cosmopolitanism".

Cosmopolitanism was invented by Diogenes the Cynic - a man famous for 2,000 years for living in a barrel - which wouldn't get him more than 15 seconds of air time in the *Ten O'Clock News*. "And finally..." slot if he were alive today. The Stoics only popularised it. A cosmopolitan is, literally, a "citizen of the world". Cosmopolitanism held that class, rank, status, national origin and gender are

irrelevant to moral worth; we may have local ties and preferences, but we are all part of a common human community. You can see the aspiration at work in modern phenomena from the International Court at the Hague to the *Bill and Ted* films, with their powerful moral, "Be cool to one another".

But the irrelevance of class and rank remains an ideal, and possibly not even that, in a country where placating the rich has become one of the first principles of government. Machiavelli's practical political thought, the subject of Quentin Skinner's slot on Wednesday, seems to have had more concrete influence. The good ruler, quoted Skinner, knows how to vary his conduct with the winds of fortune, and knows that appearance is everything. Is there some modern politician Skinner could have had in mind? Come to that, are there any Skinner could not have had in mind?

The power of history to shape the present was given its full due in *Empire* (Radio 4, Monday), where Peter Jay took Gibbon's *Decline and*

Fall of the Roman Empire as the model for a four-part obituary of the British Empire. The first programme was dragged down by a clichéd production - an imperial march by William Walton, clapping hooves, cheering crowds - and by Jay's over-assured delivery. But underneath lay an appealing intellectual shyness, an unwillingness to put forward explanations and motives for such a loose, heterogeneous phenomenon, as Jay moved towards the reflection that what can happen, will happen.

Fortunately, that isn't true, as evidenced by Kennedy's *Secret Tapes* (Radio 4, Wednesday), an account of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Anthony Howard, all breathless intelligence, narrated and Ed Bishop made a strangely sheepish JFK. What could have happened here was a nuclear strike on Cuba - in fact, the programme suggested, it came closer to happening than people realised at the time. Listening, you felt a trickle of uneasy relief that it didn't, and realised that this is what really matters about history: it's still going on.

A WEEK IN THE ARTS DAVID LISTER

Theatre just isn't "relevant", intones Dominic, the pompous young TV producer in David Hare's outstanding play *Jay's View*, which transferred to the West End this week. He is suitably chided - with Hare's approval, one suspects. But in the Royal Shakespeare Company's new season brochure also out this week, I spy the "make it relevant" factor at work once more.

Take this breathless description of a play. The hero, we read, "is the only one who knows who has killed his father. When he alerts the murderer to the fact, he puts his own life in danger." That's *Hamlet*. OK, that was easy. What about "Is it his conscience that troubles the king... or another lady?" If you plumped for *Henry VIII*, proceed to the final round. "A complex web of sexual passion, political hope and private despair." Gotcha! Anyone who correctly guessed *Uncle Tom's* can proceed straight to an executive job in the RSC marketing department.

On one level, I'm in favour of any wheeze that encourages

more people to see Adrian Noble's latest London season: on another, I smell the "Dominic tendency" here: make it all sound "relevant". And it's a bit of a con trick, ultimately of doubtful benefit.

Hamlet, despite the pretensions of innumerable directors chasing the young persons' vote, is not a thriller. It is a richly layered, complex, poignant, poetic

drama, with insights that transcend its age. It is best appreciated with some advance study of the text and its language, but the rewards are lifelong. No marketing person is going to write any of that, of course. But aren't psychological insights, poetry and unrequited love as "relevant" as the cinematic sound-bites of "alerting the murderer" and "putting his own life in danger"?

Of course, it's all a way of trying to get a new audience into the theatre. The problem with trying to persuade them that they are about to see *LA Confidential* on stage is that they might just leave at the interval.



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THE INDEPENDENT INDEPENDENT
ART 198

Professionalism and imagination: the only response to falling arts subsidies



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Among the works associated with Sir Isaiah Berlin – fondly remembered at a memorial service this week – is his enrichment of the old adage that there is no accounting for taste. Values, he taught, are incommensurable, and the old liberal idea that we should work towards a nirvana where all conflicts can be ended is not only inhuman but positively dangerous.

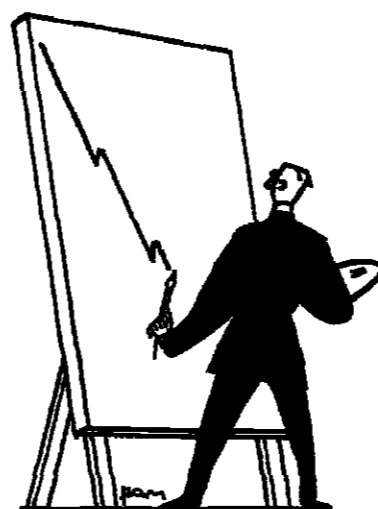
Well, scanning the latest Arts Council budget allocations, it's hard not to agree. Here is a miniature example of the wider point. How exactly do we measure the relative worthiness of supporting – out of a limited and shrinking total of public money – opera rather than film, poetry against painting, and after that, decide, say, that this big London-based company is more deserving than that provincial troupe or even (a critical example) this London orchestra rather than that?

The answer is we cannot. Decisions have to be made, and money allocated. But there will always be argument, endless dispute about what constitutes innovation, about what is good and worthy and what deserves subsidy from the taxpayers when patrons won't pay up. That debate is not just inevitable. It is thoroughly healthy. The core principle, that there should be public subsidy, is unassailable. The vexing questions are how much and for whom. What

is essential is that such judgements are made openly, and that they are available to be defended by those who make them on the public's behalf. The public's assent has to be earned rather than taken for granted. Too often arts administrators have allowed their defensiveness to become an excuse for closet decision-making, too readily (but understandably) interpreted by the public as arrogance.

That is the biggest criticism that can be levelled at the Arts Council. Born as a buffer, to stop direct political interference in artistic projects, the Council has too often itself become a sealed container, its deliberations impervious to public gaze and correction. Worse, it has not even been well run. Too often the paying public has been left with the impression of an institution afraid of debate, and inefficient with it. Too often under Arts Council oversight, arts administration has remained the province of amateurs, sincere, titled, well-intentioned... and innumerate. That is a generalisation unfair to many organisations, no doubt – but all too apt a description of, for example, the Royal Opera.

In this light, the twin appointments this week of new chairmen for both the Arts Council and the Royal Opera must be welcome news. Messrs Southgate, at Covent Garden, and Robinson, at the Arts Council,



bring two much-needed qualities to their respective tasks. Too much can be made of business acumen in the public sector – Mrs Thatcher's serial appointments proved that success in running a company or impressing the Stock Exchange is not a sufficient condition for political and administrative achievement. But managing

Granada or EMI is a very big task; it is hard to imagine Sir Colin Southgate allowing the Opera House's finances to come to their present sorry pass, if only because he would have been scrutinising the balance sheets.

What both men also offer is a fresh eye. Sir Colin takes over in anticipation of Sir Richard Eyre's report on the future of the Covent Garden site: he will need to be tough-minded and iconoclastic if company and theatre are to be re-founded. Gerry Robinson does not have to be a ruthless tycoon to ask whether the Arts Council is strictly necessary – but he will be free from the ludicrous prejudice which sees artistic endeavour as so fragile, so precious that only amateurs can be entrusted with the business of allocating grants. Both men ought to agitate for more money from all sources, that is part of the job. But both are surely realistic enough to know that – however rosy the macro-economic assumptions for the spending era after April 1999 – financial constraints are more likely to tighten than become more lax.

Besides, a lot of ritual huffing and puffing goes on over arts funding. It will always be a critical, and unending, dialogue between "elitists" and "egalitarians", between those who want to concentrate the limited sums on the identifiably excellent

companies and sites so they can build and prosper and those who want to see a thousand flowers blooming, especially in the provinces, even at the expense of quality.

A critical chairman of the Arts Council ought to get himself along to the Aldwych Theatre and pick up the question posed (but disappointingly not answered) in David Hare's new play *Amy's View*: why should (subsidised) theatre be languishing when movie and television drama flourishes? Given his background, Gerry Robinson might extend the question, and ask about orchestral subsidy levels, given the trends in the market for recorded classical music.

There are hard questions, but there are no clear or absolute answers: a fierce, forward elitism or towards populism might look intellectually clever but would be disastrous in practice. If the Arts Council is to exist at all – and we are sceptics on that – then it should prove itself by finding more imaginative ways of using public money. It should support individual makers of music, art and drama – poets and sculptors – not simply institutions. It should ensure that we are provoked as well as charmed. And above all, it should be rigorous and ruthlessly professional in its management of money. That may not be an art; but without it, art suffers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Welfare reform

Sir: I was concerned to read Tony Blair's defence of the current system of maternity benefits (letter, 13 January).

Maternity payments no longer benefit those most in need. In fact, they redistribute resources away from the poorest in society, because the more you earn, the more you get. For example, a woman earning £50,000 a year will receive maternity payments of almost £6,000, while another earning £60 per week gets nothing, because she is below the lower earnings limit.

Although £500m is spent on this benefit, one in five women workers who get pregnant get nothing.

Labour established the welfare state in 1945 – a different time, and in many ways a different world. Breadwinners were usually men, with women playing a role outside the workplace. Since the 40s, there has been an explosion of women working, particularly part-time. The social security system, and maternity benefits in particular, has not changed to reflect this.

A reforming government that wants to rejuvenate the welfare state must modernise it, and that means ensuring that redistribution is towards, and not away from, those poorest women who currently face exclusion. LORNA FITZSIMONS MP (Rochdale, Lab) Chair, Parliamentary Labour Party Women's Group House of Commons London SW1

Sir: The debate about delivery of universal benefits to the affluent raises a question. Will a government which has the courage to seek an integrated transport policy also have the stamina to address that other holy grail, the amalgamation of the tax and benefits systems?

A system whereby individuals hold a lifelong account with the state into which they pay when they are able and from which they draw as they need would obviate the distortions of the current parallel systems and offer a more subtle set of policy levers than is currently available.

For example, an individual's account might be debited for routine health services such as dental or eye care, but not for the potentially bankrupting treatment of acute or chronic illness. A variety of means might be available to credit an individual's account. A graduate seeking employment could gain credit against her student loan by undertaking voluntary work, whilst a middle-aged person might gain credit against her own pension by caring for an elderly relative and thereby saving the state a substantial sum.

A new mechanism for the financial relationship between individuals and the state is a prerequisite for a stakeholder society. JIM TOOHILL London SW4



Injustice: the sword of the disgraced Captain Alfred Dreyfus is ceremonially broken in the yard of the Ecole Militaire, January 1895 Hulton Getty

Esterhazy's fate

Sir: Esterhazy, for whose spying Dreyfus was blamed ("France still haunted by the spectre of

Dreyfus", 13 January), dealt with the German military attaché in Paris, Colonel von Schwarzkoppen, who took orders directly from the military

authorities in Berlin. The German ambassador, Count Münster von Darnberg, hated espionage, and was unaware of what was taking place. After he

fled France in September 1898, Esterhazy lived in England under various pseudonyms for most of the remainder of his life. He is buried in St Nicholas's

churchyard at Harpenden, Hertfordshire, under the name Count Jean de Voilemont. TIMOTHY ROBEY Southport, Merseyside

Sir: Someone should warn Tony Blair to watch his back. In his drive to find savings from welfare spending he is taking a

quite breathtaking risk. A Labour government which undermines the welfare state would be defenceless against a Liberal Democrat party which campaigned on a "Save the Welfare State" platform. Labour backbenchers who enjoy their jobs should think long and hard. CYRIL AYDON South Newington, Oxfordshire

Bike victim

Sir: Daniel Johnson (letter 16 January) seems to wish to justify cyclists riding on the pavement by pointing out that during a given period there were many more collisions between cars and pedestrians. He does not tell us whether the cars were driving on the pavement. He does, however, say that the statistics are unreliable when referring specifically to cyclists on pavements because "they do not indicate where the collision took place or which party was at fault".

In the case of my little girl's broken leg, her collision with a cyclist took place on the pavement, but I suppose Mr Johnson could claim that it was her fault for not stopping and looking both ways before emerging from her garden gate. NEVILLE CONDER London SW7

Sir: Setting up battle lines between cyclists and pedestrians

is not helpful. They both share the same means of propulsion, their legs, share the same concerns not to be hit by motor vehicles and as studies show (Transport Research Laboratories – Project Report 15) are well able to share the same environment with consideration and co-operation.

New cyclists and children in particular are going to need all the help and encouragement they can get if we are going to have any chance to stem the car culture and reap the manifold benefits which this efficient, low impact machine has to offer.

The answer is not in more bureaucracy with fixed penalties at some places and complicated procedures to redesignate footpaths for dual use of pedestrians and cyclists in others. The part of the ancient Highways Act prohibiting cyclists from footways should be repealed and the time and effort go into promoting good practice and considerate behaviour. Sections 28 and 29 of the Road Traffic Act on dangerous riding and due care and attention cover this. Fixed penalties, administered with discretion, for cases of bad behaviour under this Act may well be appropriate. PETER HAYMAN Glasgow

Asthma in Cuba

Sir: Mrs J Mathews suggests that the rise in asthma may be connected with multi-vaccination at an early age (letter, 14 January).

Two years ago I went to Cuba on holiday. While I was on a group visit to a collective farm the resident nurse was asked about the main medical problems encountered locally. She said that one of their main concerns was the steady increase in childhood asthma. On further questioning it was apparent that the asthma trends in Cuba over the last few decades have been broadly similar to those in the UK.

One would think that the environments were quite different; especially that Cuba has very little road traffic pollution, because it has very little road traffic. Climate and diet are different. One thing that Cuba does have in common with the UK is a comprehensive public health service, including mass childhood vaccination.

I would be tempted to jump to the conclusion that Mrs Mathews has hit the nail on the head, but Tony Bosworth of Friends of the Earth points out on the same page that some kinds of air pollution are felt a long way

from their source. So asthma in Cuba and the UK might both be caused by global pollution of some kind. However, the coincidence of the vaccination programmes deserves close study. KEN HAGGETT Sheffield

Unfilled jobs

Sir: There seemed to be two strands of thought in your article (14 January) on recruitment difficulties in the food industry: the unwillingness of talented young people to enter and the paucity of qualified and experienced managers.

I have noticed unwillingness among my children's peers to enter any industrial or manufacturing business. Their view is that potential employers offer no security in the long term in return for lower remuneration during training and, as a result, they are better advised to make their talents into high-paid/high-risk jobs in IT and finance.

Until manufacturing companies convince talented young people that they are reliable partners, why should entrants into the job market prefer them to consultancy firms offering more immediate cash and no less secure futures?

The shortage of experienced and qualified managers is a myth. The largest group of people in the UK is the post-war bulge group. These are between 45 and 50. How many vacancies do the appointments

columns carry that reflect this reality? An older manager looking for a job is often rejected as "overqualified" when he is eminently suitable except that he is applying for a post similar to one that he did successfully 15-20 years ago. A C WATSON Woking Surrey

Fast answers

Sir: Our Dad read the article on encyclopaedias and computer CD-Roms (13 January), and then set us the three questions that the two researchers were given. We achieved all the questions in less than three minutes. We think most children between six and 12 who have a PC at home could do as well or better. We think your researchers must have been either very young (under four) or very old (over 16). MICHAEL KINSELLA (aged seven) JAMES KINSELLA (aged 10) Glasgow

Pigs in clover

Sir: Regarding the two escaped pigs, I am sure that Lord Emsworth would be delighted to give them a comfortable home in the wonderful surroundings of Blandings Castle and, no doubt, his brother Galahad would be able to devise suitable compensation for their owner. PHILIP R EVANS Hengrave, Suffolk

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Well, I am clearly a dullard editor. For why? Because my brilliant wheeze of the week comes just too late. There has been a frantic bidding war for the Tamworth porkers. The Express wanted to buy them for £1,000 but was outbid by rivals, and the price has reportedly now hit five figures. The nation has, momentarily, put down its cutlery to shed a fat and sentimental tear over the runaway pigs. Our resident bard, Martin Newall, produced a very fine ballad on the subject earlier in the week. Now, though, the Plain People of Britain wish – no, they absolutely demand – that there be a happy ending to the story, with Butch and Sundance given luxurious quarters and a handsome income before enjoying a happy retirement. Only then will the PPB settle down, relaxed, to enjoy a packet of pork scratchings and a bacon sandwich.

Here, surely, was a great opportunity for a ruthlessly amoral editor (Marr, A) to make a buck. We should have outbid everyone, splashing out £50,000 or £100,000, for the pigs. Then we could have announced that they were going to be turned into bacon butties and sold to our readers... unless a kinder-hearted rival bought them back from us first. Given the sentimental weakness of the tabloid press, I could have made a packet, certainly tripling the investment, and earning enough to buy in a couple of dippy twenty-something columnists, a Paul Johnson essay on moral turpitude, and open a bureau in Brazil. Dammit. Why didn't I think of that earlier?

When I was nobbut a boy in Perthshire, I devoured the first glossy *Sunday Times* magazines partly because they published, week after week, illustrations from exhibitions that I'd never get to see. Then, for some reason, the fashion for visual art in weekend magazines passed.

In today's *Independent Saturday Magazine*, however, you will find pages devoted to paintings from Manchester, Liverpool, Swindon, Plymouth, Cookham and other non-London galleries. Next week the paintings go on show at the Royal Academy, where a ticket to "The Art Treasures of England; the Regional Collections" will cost you £7. Most of the time, though, you can see these and many other treasures free at local galleries.

Why the campaigning note? Because this will be the year when the principle of free access to public galleries and museums survives or dies. A holding operation has kept the British Museum free for now but its finances are precarious and there are those in the Treasury asking why the taxpayer should help. Many of the galleries whose finest jewels are in the new exhibition are in a parlous state too. Closing them off to casual visitors would be as bad an act of civic vandalism as shutting urban parks.

Though the phrase "Victorian values" came to be associated with Margaret Thatcher, there's more than a whiff of Victorianism about New Labour too. There's Gladstone as Blair's preferred role model. There's the belief in work and self-reliance preached from Downing Street, and even the more traditionalist morality of those middle-class converts whom the American sociologist Charles Murray defined a few years ago as "new Victorians". But of course most of the struggling regional galleries were also Victorian creations and remind us of another side to that era; the generous-minded and open attitude to the arts as an essential aspect of education. These are mind-altering substances which this newspaper firmly believes should be freely available on demand... and yes, even to children.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Alas, in a culture that encourages feeble-minded political correctness, great monuments and great works of art are not to be expected – Stephen Bayley, who resigned as creative director of the Millennium Dome, protesting about the involvement of focus groups in its creation

Robin Cook is obviously dangerous around airports. First he ditched his wife, now he's declaring undying love. His advisers should make sure he only travels by road or rail – Linda McDougall, author of the book *Westminster Women*

We need to make reading more sexy. The literati is dominated by those who graduated from Oxbridge in states of advanced condescension – Kathy Lette, bestselling author

Anyone who watched the game or has seen a video will recognise it would have taken the act of a contortionist with stilettos to studs for a boot to have caused Simon's injury – Richard Yerbury, London Scottish chief executive on claims the ear injury was not caused by a bite

I've done something with my life. I've made kids happy around the world – Walter Diemer, inventor of bubble gum, before he died this week

Celebrity is as addictive and destructive as any drink and I am a recovering celebrity – Barry Manilow

subsidies

If only I were a hard-working, hard-drinking Jewish agnostic



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
UNEXPLAINED
CORRELATIONS

A sex survey published in the United States this week sheds important light on the welfare debate currently raging in this country. With the swapping of statistics on benefit fraud, the amount of abuse of disability payments and the existence or otherwise of a dependency culture, the all-important question is raised yet again about whether we are seeing causation or simply correlation. This week, fortuitously, assistance in the interpreting of such figures has come from Penn State University, under whose aegis a major study of sexual activity involving 10,000 Americans has just been completed. And the results of this very large survey have sent academics and sociologists into a frenzy of evaluation, as they compete to explain the results.

The first important figure tells us that there is less of this sex stuff going on than we thought. (Although a warning here: as far as I can tell onanism is not counted as sexual activity by the Penn State researchers.) Twenty per cent of respondents had not "had" sex in the previous year, while 5 per cent did it at least three times a week. Overall this led to a statistic revealing that, while 15 per cent of the people had 50 per cent of the sex, the remaining 85 per cent had to share the rest between them – the sort of figure one associates with grossly unequal and unfair societies.

So, if you are an American who is not having a lot of sex, someone somewhere is getting your share. One day, an observer might speculate, the sexually dispossessed will rise up and occupy the boudoirs of the over-privileged. The Peter Stringfellow of Muncie and Boise will be found, suspended from the lamp-posts by their ...

But hold on to that rope, for there is much more interesting material to come. A series of figures breaks down the types of people and groups within society who are most and least likely to have more than their fair ration of sex. And there are some surprises here. Those who work long hours report hav-

ing sex more often, as do those who watch the largest amount of television. At a rate of 111 times per year, married couples under 29 do it more than singles of the same age (72), or older married couples (figure not given, but I suspect around the six mark).

Those with doctorates manage less houghmagandy than those with first degrees only, jazz enthusiasts more than rock music lovers. Catholics a weeny bit more than Protestants but 20 per cent less than agnostics or Jews. Smokers do it 10 per cent more than the average, drinkers 20 per cent more, and those who both drink and smoke claim to have twice as much. In a final twist, everyone claims to have more sex during periods when confidence in the presidency is generally low.

Now, we are entitled to ask some questions about these results. It may well be, for instance, that drinkers simply think they've had more sex than they actually have, or that heavy smokers are forced – by their shortness of breath – to count things as being sex which the rest of us don't. Baths and suchlike.

But once we have dealt with any obvious anomalies, we must move on to explanations. And this is where we are forced to consider the difference between correlation and cause. Is it the fact of one's occupation or religion or musical preferences that determines one's sexual behaviour? Or is there just a correlation, which is actually caused by the general characteristics that led to some of these choices in the first place?

The significance of this question cannot be overstated. Theoretically, the person most likely to have the most sex is a twenty-something, married, Republican Jew with religious doubts, who works long hours, failed his or her doctorate and sits in front of the TV watching the Jazz station all evening, chain-smoking and boozing.

Now suppose that you are a teenage American who wishes, during his or her lifetime, to experience the optimum level of carnality. Were you to believe that these statistics indicated clear causal (as opposed to correlative) relationships, you would now begin to take action. If you were a gay you would go through the process of conversion to Judaism as soon as was practicable. And once converted, you would stand outside the synagogue on Saturday muttering, "I'm just not sure, Lord!" You would take up smoking at once, and force yourself to drink copious amounts of alcohol until you were fully acclimatised.

As soon as you came home from work or studies – which would be very late – you would flop down in front of the box, taking this opportunity to catch up on the cigarettes and drinks denied you during the day. In the car you would, at all times, play contemporary jazz tapes while complaining loudly about how Bill Clinton is sending the country to hell in a handcart.

When we scrutinise such an itinerary, it does not seem – on the face of it – to be one that holds out the promise of many long nights of writhing physical pleasure. Far from it. Personally, I would not want to sleep with such a person.

So I'd draw one of two very different conclusions from the above scenario. The first is that two surveys have become mixed up and misattributed in the Penn State computer – one on the amount of sexual activity undertaken, and the other on the incidence of early death from heart failure.

The other conclusion is that what we have here is merely a set of random correlations, and that we still have no idea what it all means. Which brings us back, I'm sure you will agree, to the Welfare debate.

The best vacations are not an escape, but a liberation



BOYD
TONKIN
HOLIDAYS OF
THE MIND

Why travel? This week we have published articles for and against the vogue for visiting foreign places. Our concluding contribution argues that it is not where, but how, you travel that really matters.

Back at the start of this decade, when Vincent Van Gogh held his centenary bash, I did my culture-vulture duty and booked timed, dated tickets to the two big shows in Holland. Vincent's graphic works, which I love almost more than those over-exposed paintings, were installed at a museum deep in woodland near the German border. And very wonderful they proved to be – yet, oddly, not quite so memorable as the free white bicycles. In a nostalgic nod to the Amsterdam hippies of the Sixties, the surrounding country park offers visitors a fleet of unlocked bikes that you can ride for as long and as far as you want.

I can renew my passion for Vincent's engraved boots or blossoms at any time by opening a book. But I'm still looking for another A-list exhibition with a head-clearing spin attached. The best travel consists of what Labour's own sultans of spin call "going off-message". It involves moments when you discover that, much as you like traipsing round galleries, you can enjoy a wobbly turn through the forest just as much (or vice versa). It means, in effect, having a holiday from yourself – from the bonds of habit and ego that tether people to their roles at home and work.

The paradox is that you can never plan or purchase these bursts of liberation. The actual who, expensively kitted out, becomes a snowboard hero on the Colorado slopes is just buying into someone else's pricey message. That soul-scrubbing mission to the ashram, or to find your inner child in therapy on

a Greek island, will also miss the mark. Unbidden glimpses of another you have precious little to do with cash spent, distance travelled or gurus consulted. The light of revelation can descend in Bogor and Bangkok alike.

Travel firms, of course, try to exploit our frets about the yoke of ego in some pretty crass ways. At its crudest, the new-laddish (and new-lassish) appeal to a fortnight of bed-hopping, with plastered nights under the stars and hungover days baking on the sand, simply sells a mirror-image of nine-to-five drudgery. Turning your safe bourgeois routine upside down for a bit before slinking back to the grind will always disappoint, because you can't (as it were) keep it up for ever. Quick-fix hedonism briefly swaps one off-the-peg lifestyle for another. Its bid for short-term freedom stems from the belief that, elsewhere, we will always be in chains.

Hence the familiar despair of the post-vacation Monday back at work. It's not so much that many people want to binge in a bar or fry on a beach for 365 days every year as that they fear being slotted back into the usual pigeonholes. So, instead of seeking orgy or oblivion as a reward for 50 weeks of numbed conformity, we could use holidays to experiment with ways of being that may last much longer than the duty-free vodka.

Away from home, people feel willing to test-drive alternative versions of themselves. This pilot self is the one that dives down that unmarked alleyway, slips into that intriguing café and greets the stranger at your table – the self that risks a bit of surprise and spontaneity. But, if we really wished, we could manage that in the high street as well as the High Andes. "Travel: Bad" claimed John Rentoul on this page on Monday. "Travel: Good" riposted Simon Calder the next day. I would argue that mere bodily movement means nothing at all, but that displacement can trigger the changes that we seek.

If you do want to revamp your sense of identity, how to travel matters more than where. It may even be that intrepid treks in far-flung locations rule out that kind of mental gear-change. Scaling glaciers or dodging crocodiles calls for too much of a vigilant ego to allow for the creative drift that opens new doors in the mind. For that, you need a sense of physical security and a willingness to follow your nose, not your route-map.

I feel freest in busy, fairly prosperous places that don't much care whether I'm around or not. "Escape" to that palm-fringed tropical atoll or that quaint rainforest pueblo, and you not only have to act the part of Mr or Ms Rich Won't-Get-Stung Westerner, forever on the

look-out for con-artists or creepy-crawlies. You must also take a starring role in a hundred mortifying little sideshows that dramatise the gulf between the rich and poor worlds. Those ghastly fortress-style resorts in the Caribbean, where the only locals you meet are serving cocktails, merely add insult to injury. If you're happy to carry the misdeeds of the World Bank and the IMF in your suitcase, fine; if not, you may reach a deeper detachment from the cares of home in Berlin than in Bogota.

Two kinds of voyage illustrate the sort of self-extension that even quite humdrum holidays can bring. First is the pilgrimage, once a staple trip for European travellers and still – as the *hajj* to Mecca – a central pillar of Islam. As any Chaucer-reader knows, Western pilgrims set out for a range of reasons that stretched from the sacred to the sordid – but they all knew that the journey happened as much in the mind as on the ground. Recently, the great pilgrim's path to Santiago de Compostella has come back into vogue. Meanwhile, wholly secular opportunities for small

groups to enjoy a spell of change or reflection come dressed up as study trips in search of Pyrenean flora, Cycladic temples or Bulgarian icons.

As for the other sort of inner-directed voyage, you really can try this at home. In France during the 1920s, the Surrealist artists and writers pioneered a form of aimless urban strolling as a boost to their creative inspiration. Wandering around Paris, they hoped that random meetings and sudden insights would open up for them the strange poetry of daily life. Louis Aragon's haunting book *Paris Peasant* recounts the kind of weird and wonderful encounters that can result from a decision to treat anywhere – and especially your own backyard – as the most exotic spot on earth.

The Surrealists found beauty and mystery in the drabest city street. In contrast, over-earnest, ego-laden voyagers can experience beautiful and mysterious sites as a cliché or a chore. So drop that guidebook, jump on a bike and remember that much of travel – like much of sex – takes place purely in the head.



Canterbury pilgrims: the best travel is always a sort of pilgrimage

Bridgeman Art Library

The New Toryism as preached by Michael Portillo



TREVOR
PHILLIPS
LANGUAGE
AND POLITICS

You wonder why the Tories bother. In the very week that they come forward with the revolutionary proposal that their candidate for the Mayor of London be selected by a vote of all party members in the capital, Peter Stringfellow, the famous nightclub owner, announces his candidature. Offered the choice between 24-hour lap dancing and, say, living in a Jeffrey Archer novel, what do you think the capital's citizens will choose? No contest. Get your flares out: clubbing may be compulsory in Stringfellow's London.

Still, the decision to offer the party's members a say in this and

other big decisions – not least electing the leader – must be causing some furrowed brows down at the Carlton Club, which has carried the torch for Tory traditionalists for centuries. William Hague, when not honooomooning or boozing on down in Notting Hill, has had little to say about policy; having nailed the issue of Europe down, he is busy reconstructing the Tory house. He is evidently following the sound advice of those Tories who pleaded for a period of silence after the election. No one really wants to hear much from a party that is unlikely to be able to affect the price of cheese this side of the millennium.

But specific policies are not all. What a party feels like is at certain stages far more important. Organisation matters; but the stuff you pour into the bottle – the party's culture – is what voters respond to. New Labour's leaders' choice of language – tough, conservative – should have warned us all that they would not behave like Labour governments of the 1970s, ready to blow with the wind of popular sentiment. Indeed, as some of my friends in the arts world discovered this week, this Government positively delights in demonstrating its robustness in the face of old-style appeals not to abandon the needs of a

civilised society. "Civilisation", Treasury ministers seem to be saying, "is what you can pay for: now, stop whingeing." The Tories have to find their "feel" too.

The letter from the Tory grandees to this newspaper, quarrelling with Mr Hague's suppression of debate on Europe, was the wrong feel. It made them look like men locked in a war that the rest of the world had forgotten. It is true that Europe divided the Con-

Remember, in the 1960s it was the Tories who were the fun party, they could be so again.

servative Party, and that perception played a part in their defeat. However, it was not simply the fact of the division, but that it was over an issue that most of the British public feel is done and dusted. Sooner or later we will join: that's the fact of our life in the global economy, and the timing and detail is for our politicians to work out. The argument is over.

For some Tories, though, this was the assembly of the great One-Nation tradition, repre-

sented most eye-catchingly by the signature of Chris Patten. He is still a brooding presence on the Christian Democratic wing of the party, said to be just waiting for Hague to stumble. But his involvement here, plus his improbable interest in running London, are signs of an uneasy spirit, worried about being forgotten, yet unsure about how to find his way back to the limelight. He does not represent the future of the Tories; but if not him, then who?

Thus far, there is no flavour of New Toryism emerging from Hague's own kitchen. But there is a tantalising odour of something exotic wafting our way from Enfield. Mr Michael Portillo has been back to the lander and has been rummaging around to see what ingredients he can offer to entice the missing millions. In his speech this week, he brought out the old staple, opposition to any progress towards European integration; but he wrapped it in some new

phrases, dealing with Britain's place in a global economy.

Where Labour may begin to seem grimly defensive on the international stage, Portillo is beginning to paint a picture of the UK as a centre of global trading, open to all, and able to span the world unencumbered by any regional attachments. On welfare, he astounded many by his speech at the last party conference, appealing for Tories to be understanding and humane; welfare mothers could be safer in his world. Even the Portillo groupies, such as the journalist Simon Heffer, are being driven to wonder aloud if they are truly hearing these words from the master's voice.

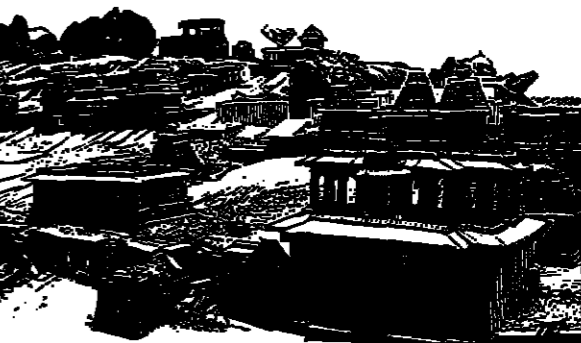
But Portillo has never been a simple proposition. He is not a pantomime Tory villain – far from it. His age, his intellect all separate him from the old Tory right. Now, freed from the factions that kept his party riven, he is able to imagine a new culture for his party.

The Tory party, so long yoked to the old Powellite obsession with English values, could become as internationalist as it was in the nineteenth century (in its imperialist mode); it could be the champion of relaxed libertarian values against a government that too often gives off a whiff of puritan self-righteousness; it could be the party that stands up

for the rights of the individual in the face of Labour's tendency towards grim corporatism. Remember, in the 1960s, it was the Tories who were the fun party; they could be so again. In their final years of government, they may have appeared to be enjoying themselves a little too much at the expense of others; but the nation, as we approach the millennium, is ready to hang loose and have a good time – and laughing along is a luxury oppositions have that governments don't always enjoy.

I know that some of you felt I myself should have been more relaxed about the John Motson affair. However, the BBC has sent me the text of a full apology for the incident issued by Moty. It is indeed full and unreserved. However, in mitigation, he points out that he does not only have problems with blacks: he now finds it difficult to identify the Italian player Gianfranco Zola because of his new haircut. Personally, I'm prepared to leave the whole affair at a yellow card; but for the commentator's sake, I just hope that Mr Zola's barber is not offended; after all he might just be from Sicily, and the traditional Sicilian response to personal slights leaves the average Vinnie Jones tackle looking like a love bite.

It took invaders six months to destroy Hampi. But it will live in the memory forever.



400 years ago Hampi was considered the greatest of all mediaeval Hindu capitals with markets that overflowed with silks, diamonds, rubies and emeralds. In 1365 it was systematically razed to the ground by invading forces. But although this mighty civilization has disappeared, the ruins and remains live on as a world heritage site. Now visitors take the train journey from Bombay or Bangalore to relive what has been aptly termed The Pompei of India, to visit the Bazaar, its museums, the Lotus Palace and the extraordinary Vittalla Temple. Hampi is a glorious memory. It will live in your mind forever.

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Pastor Georgi Vins



Photograph: Keston College

Georgi Petrovich Vins, pastor born Blagoveshchensk, Siberia 4 August 1928, married (one son, three daughters); died Elkhardt, Indiana 11 January 1998.

Georgi Vins hit the world's headlines twice – when he was sentenced in 1975 for his work as a leader of the Baptist churches that resisted Soviet government controls and again in April 1979 when he was dramatically expelled from the Soviet Union with four other dissidents in exchange for two spies convicted in the United States.

The events surrounding his expulsion were bizarre. On 26 April 1979 he was woken up in prison and told to change into his own clothes. Completely unaware of his imminent change of circumstances, he was flown to Moscow for what would be his last night on Soviet soil, which he spent on bare boards in a centre for vagrants. The following day he was issued with new clothes and informed by an official who refused to give his name that because of his anti-Soviet activity the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet had stripped him of his Soviet citizenship. He was being expelled.

Vins protested in vain that his activity was not anti-Soviet, but had to bow to the inevitable.

He was told to write down the names of his close relatives so that they could leave the country with him and, realising that he would be unlikely to see them again otherwise, listed his wife, children, mother and niece. He was driven to Lefortovo prison and then all five expellees were taken to Moscow airport. Two American embassy officials on the plane explained that their release followed an agreement between the White House and the Soviet embassy in Washington. It was not until the plane landed in New York that they learnt they were being exchanged for two convicted spies, and the handover took place in an isolated hangar at Kennedy airport. The five walked off the plane at one end while the spies walked on at the other.

Once in the United States, Vins (and six weeks later the rest of his family) gradually settled down to the very different life of an exile, making the town of Elkhardt in Indiana his home and slowly learning English. He received invitations to the White House and to innumerable events around the world. At first there was hot competition between missions supporting persecuted churches in the Soviet Union to enlist him, but Vins kept his distance. He eventually set up the international representation of the Baptist churches in the Soviet Union that owed their allegiance to the Council of Churches, a group of tight-knit congregations that categorically rejected any compromises with the Soviet authorities and refused to register officially. Their members were suffering fierce persecution, with hundreds in labour camps or psychiatric hospitals.

Vins was born in the Russian Far East in 1928 to Peter Vins, an American citizen of Russian origin who had travelled to Siberia just two years before as a missionary. His father was arrested in 1930, freed three years later but soon rearrested. The family was later informed he had died. The

young Georgi was brought up by his mother, Lydia.

After the Second World War the two of them moved to Kiev and Georgi qualified as an engineer. He also became involved in the Baptist Church there. It was as Khrushchev's anti-religious persecutions began in 1959 that the state tried to impose new regulations on the Baptist Church that drastically curtailed the small measure of independence they enjoyed. As the Baptist movement split acrimoniously, Vins became one of the leading figures in the campaign to resist state pressure. He publicly opposed the pastor of his own congregation in Kiev who had accepted the new measures. Vins formed his own breakaway congregation, becoming its pastor despite his lack of theological qualifications. The group had to meet in a forest outside Kiev.

When the Council of Churches was formally set up as an underground body in 1965, Vins became its general secretary. Hundreds of the movement's followers were already in prison. In an astonishing protest, Baptists converged from all over the Soviet Union for a mass demonstration outside the Central Committee building in Moscow. Several days later, Vins went to the Central Committee with other leaders to ask about the fate of those who had been detained at the unprecedented demonstration. They were themselves arrested. Vins and another colleague finally went on trial in November 1966 and he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. His wife, Nadezhda, was left to look after their four children.

After release, Vins resumed his work as pastor and organiser of the movement, but soon had to go into hiding to avoid arrest. He was finally discovered and seized in March 1974. Prodded by the human rights campaigner Andrei Sakharov, the World Council of Churches finally joined the international protests at Vins'

arrest. Vins was tried in Kiev in January 1975 and sentenced to five years in labour camp to be followed by five years' internal exile, becoming the Soviet Union's most famous religious prisoner. International pressure finally led to his dramatic expulsion from his homeland.

Vins' work aiding Baptist victims of persecution changed dramatically in the late 1980s, when open Christian work became possible. In 1990 President Gorbachev revoked the decree that had stripped Vins of his Soviet citizenship, thereby allowing him to revisit his homeland. In the 1990s Vins made numerous preaching trips, especially in Russia and Ukraine. In 1995 he was allowed access in Moscow to his father's KGB case file, and it was with mixed emotions that Vins finally learnt that his father had been executed in 1936. But reading the record of his father's interrogation he realised that throughout his own battles with the Soviet authorities he had been following in his father's footsteps.

Vins was a thoughtful leader with a certain presence. Although he had taken a hard line over the split in the Baptist Union in the early 1960s, he later felt a little uncomfortable with the aggressively uncompromising stance taken by many of his former colleagues. Splits within the Council of Churches over the past few years caused him much sadness and he was unhappy with those in Russia who called themselves Vinsites.

When he discovered late last year that he had a malignant inoperable brain tumour, he faced up to it with courage. He had already successfully undergone heart bypass surgery in the late 1980s, but this time treatment was unsuccessful. "The Lord is powerful and could shrink my tumour," he said. "But if not and God calls me to Heaven, I won't be sorry to go!"

— Felix Corley



Wells at the London Blues Festival, 1995

Photograph: Dave Peabody / Redferns

Junior Wells

Amos Blackmore (Junior Wells), vocalist and harmonica player; born Memphis, Tennessee 9 December 1934; died Chicago 15 January 1998.

The virtuoso Larry Adler took the harmonica to the concert hall and gave it respectability. Junior Wells took it right back to the gutter and gave it a fire and passion that made one think the instrument would burst at the seams. The mouth organ is a compromised musical hybrid and only Adler had the immense talent to make it larger than its limitations. The tight-knit group of Chicago bluesmen to which Wells belonged used it for a more practical reason: it was cheap to buy.

The rent party is an institution unknown in this country. Impoverished black Americans have held rent parties since the beginning of the century. To

raise money to pay their rent people would organise parties and charge guests admission. Food, drink and music would be provided. Newly arrived in Chicago in 1946, Junior Wells made his living playing blues at such gatherings.

The Chicago blues style was unique. It brought the rural blues to the city and added electrical amplification not just to the guitars, but also to the mouth harps, as the harmonica was known. The music was harsh and intense.

Wells had been influenced as a child by Howlin' Wolf and Junior Parker, then local heroes in Memphis. In Chicago he formed the Three Aces, building on his success with the group until 1952 when Muddy Waters, the city's leading blues player, asked him to replace another mouth harp player, Little Walter, in his band. Ironically Little Walter then joined the Aces. Wells was called into the

army in 1953 but absented himself to rejoin Muddy Waters and to record with him. He returned to sort out his difficulties with the army and reformed the Aces on his discharge in 1955.

His partnership with the guitarist Buddy Guy, formed in 1958, established the two as a force outside Chicago and with Wells's album *Hoodoo Man* in 1966 he became famous worldwide. Records made by Wells and Guy influenced the members of the Rolling Stones and the two men toured Europe with the group in 1970. Although they became in demand for festivals at home and abroad and won various awards (Wells was nominated for a Grammy) the two always returned to Chicago.

Before he became ill last September Wells had completed scenes for the film *Blues Brothers 2000* and also recorded a track for a tribute album to the Rolling Stones, *Paint It Blue*.

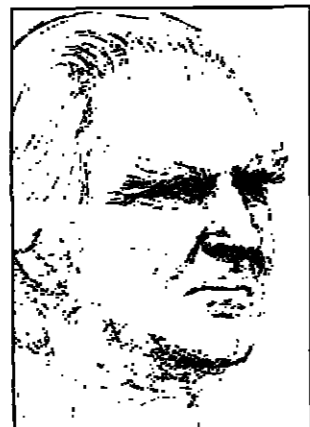
— Steve Voce

Francis Skinner

Russell Thomas Francis Skinner, architect born Kuala Lumpur 13 October 1908; married 1966 Josephine Wadley (one daughter); died Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk 6 January 1998.

Francis Skinner was the last surviving of the seven original members of Tecton, the pioneering architectural practice formed under Berthold Lubetkin in 1932 that dominated the formative period of the Modern Movement in Britain. Skinner was Lubetkin's closest colleague, who shared and supported his charismatic partner's belief in modern architecture as an instrument of social progress.

Born in Kuala Lumpur the eldest of three brothers and two sisters, Francis Skinner was "sent home" to England at an early age to be brought up by a



Skinner: drawn by his wife

maternal aunt in Reading. Entering the Architectural Association in 1927 he became disenchanted with the traditionalist teaching and focused on the radical developments in Europe, many of which he had visited by 1930. A contemporary recalls him reducing an AA stu-

dio master to tears in a school crit with his scheme for a Florentine Renaissance church composed entirely of exposed RSJs. His first building, a prize-winning reinforced concrete house for the Modern Homes Exhibition at Gidea Park was completed in 1934 when he was only 26.

"Freddie" Skinner was deeply engaged in the political struggles of the 1930s, being a committed member of the Communist Party and the secretary and driving force of the Architects & Technicians Organisation, which campaigned for better housing conditions and building practices. He was also active in the AASTA (Association of Architects, Surveyors and Technical Assistants) and ABT (Association of Building Technicians), which promoted unionisation of building workers and salaried staff.

Tecton's work resumed after the war with the housing projects at Spa and Priory Green, Paddington and Holford Square.

This activity was all pursued alongside his work in Tecton, where, as for Lubetkin, his political and professional aspirations converged most closely in the work for Finsbury Council, beginning with the Health Centre completed in 1938 and now listed Grade I. The same year Skinner visited Spain to study the effects of aerial bombardment in the Civil War, his findings contributing to Tecton's controversial scheme of deep bomb-proof shelters for Finsbury. Though these eventually came to nothing his knowledge was re-applied during the Second World War when he served with the Royal Engineers and volunteered for bomb disposal work, having found routine duties too dull.

Tecton's work resumed after the war with the housing projects at Spa and Priory Green, Paddington and Holford Square.

Skinner seeing through the Finsbury schemes during Lubetkin's tenure at Peterlee. Skinner declined an invitation from Le Corbusier to join him at Chandigarh in 1950 but continued with major housing developments in Bethnal Green, Hackney and Southwark in the reformed firm of Skinner, Bailey & Lubetkin. This arrangement, whereby Skinner played a key but generally unacknowledged role in running the practice, enabled Lubetkin to remain professionally active during the period when he is widely but mistakenly supposed to have forsaken architecture for farming.

Francis Skinner, the only founding member of Tecton to stay with Lubetkin for his entire professional life, once described his celebrated partner as "the most complete architect you could imagine – a brilliant designer, knowledgeable about

structure, very persuasive with clients and a good organiser". But he modestly omitted to mention the qualities he himself brought to their association that made it so durable – a critical appreciation of Lubetkin's vision, a comparable aesthetic sensibility and the inexhaustible dedication and tenacity needed to produce buildings of lasting significance. Their compatible personalities and the complementary nature of their gifts resulted in a unique body of work that neither could have achieved on his own.

Skinner retired in the 1970s to Suffolk, where he continued with various personal projects, including teaching himself Russian and making an extensive study of historic houses and castles. Typically, he approached these not from a sentimental or tourist perspective but as manifestations of Britain's social

structure and political development. With his wife Jo, a professional artist and accomplished geologist, he would embark on several tours each year, carefully planned around the locations of their objectives – a series of buildings in his case, a group of fossil sites in hers. Their mutual devotion accommodated these different interests with characteristic generosity, travelling in separate camper vans to pre-agreed destinations where they would reunite each evening to discuss the day's exploits.

Behind Francis Skinner's innate reticence lay unshakeable egalitarian ideals and a profound belief in the essential humanism of art and science. The very embodiment of George Orwell's phrase "the crystal spirit", he was steadfast, gentle and true.

— John Allan

Ian Moores

Ian Richard Moores, footballer; born Silverdale, Staffordshire 5 October 1954; played for Stoke City 1972-76, Tottenham Hotspur 1976-78, Orient 1978-82, Bolton Wanderers 1982-83, Barnsley (on loan) 1983; married (two sons); died Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire 12 January 1998.

There was a time when big, blond, bewhiskered Ian Moores was being touted as an England centre-forward in the making.

Indeed, while cutting a dash with his first professional club, Stoke City, in the mid-1970s, he made two international appearances at under-23 level. But, having achieved a seemingly ideal career move to Tottenham Hotspur, Moores faded disappointingly from the limelight.

Moores made his senior debut for the Potters, then a force in the old First Division, and one of the most entertaining sides in the land, in April 1974. The next season, though not a regular member of the team, he learnt quickly from such immensely gifted colleagues as Jimmy Greenhoff and Alan Hudson, and played a telling part in the club's impressive League form. Had the City squad been extensive enough to cope with an injury crisis of crippling proportions, the 20-year-old Moores might have pocketed a championship medal.

He attracted attention from a host of leading clubs, and after he had played what was to prove the most compelling football of his life during the subsequent campaign, earning his international recognition in the process, he joined Spurs for £75,000 in August 1976.

Now came a period of golden opportunity for Moores and he began with a goal in a stirring victory against Manchester United at Old Trafford. But although his aerial power was fearsome and sometimes he could apply a delicate touch that was surprising in such a strapping fellow, too often he appeared cumbersome and gauche. With the north Londoners suffering relegation from the top flight at the end of his first term at White Hart Lane, the fans lost patience and his star began to fall. There was one memorable day in the Second Division, when he contributed a hat-trick to Tottenham's 9-0 rouncing of Bristol Rovers, but such bounty was rare.

In October 1978, with hopes of full England honours long gone, Moores accepted a £55,000 switch to Second Division Orient (as Leyton Orient were called at the time), whom he served competently for four seasons, usually at centre-forward but occasionally in midfield. He was released when the Os were demoted in 1982, going on to brief stints with Bolton Wanderers and Barnsley (on loan) and a spell with Apollon in Cyprus. Thereafter several non-League clubs and Landskrona, a club of Sweden afforded humble outlets for the talents of a man for whom expectations had once been so high.

— Ivan Ponting

FAITH & REASON

'No room at the Dome for Jesus.' Quite right too

Peter Mandelson has assured Christians that Christianity will be central to his millennium celebrations. Huw Spanner wonders whether that is such a good idea.

There are calls from many quarters for a strong showing of Christianity in the Millennium Experience. "No room at the Dome for Jesus," complains the *Daily Telegraph*. "Whose millennium is it anyway?" ask others (somewhat disingenuously, since Christ's 2,000th birthday falls in 2001, even if you accept the official birthdate). Even the Bishop of Oxford has joined in.

But the prospect inspires a vague unease. Perhaps it is just a question of context: Christians who regret that religion is listed under leisure pursuits in government surveys of social trends may regret even more if it becomes a "dimension" of a lottery-funded, corporate-sponsored designer celebration of... Of what? No one yet knows. What hopes or dreams or New Millennium resolutions the nation is supposed to embrace in Mandelson's Dome remain a mystery.

As much of his "vision" as he has so far revealed amounts to "I have seen the future and it's playing surfball."

In any event, how could Christianity be exhibited there? How could you advertise the Celestial City in *Unity Fair*? The values that the Dome seems already to embody – style before substance, pleasure before commitment, pride in our own achievements and a good feeling about our selves – stand in contradiction of the values of the Sermon on the Mount. One suspects that Jesus's legacy as interpreted in the Experience would anyway be a matter of the cultural ephemera: from stained-glass windows to "rave" worship.

And what do we mean by Christianity? To the vast majority of people, it is a human construct, a system (or muddle) of beliefs and practices. In that sense, every manifestation of it is authentic, and any account of its impact on our history is dishonest if it does not acknowledge the bad as much as the good. If Christianity is given credit for the building of cathedrals, it must also take the blame for the burning of "witches" (though both were probably as much the product of superstition or local politics as of anything else). Is

this historical curate's egg what the faithful want to celebrate?

But Christianity itself claims not to be a human construct but to be truth, single and unchanging though imperfectly understood. On its own terms, it cannot be a mixed blessing, because everything that is wrong (in any sense) is by definition foreign to it: anything or anyone that does not bear good fruit is not truly Christian. This is the account that most believers would want to give – but in the hyped-up atmosphere of the Dome it would sound like so much more corporate PR. And there is another factor to complicate any official celebration of the true essence of Christianity: it is God who judges what is good and what is true, and his judgements are not yet revealed. And no doubt they'll be very different from ours.

Why are people so anxious that the Experience should have a Christian element? One reason, perhaps, is that as we leave the 20th century and the second millennium behind, the feeling will be strong that we are closing a chapter (if not a book) and beginning a fresh one. The dawning of a new age may not have seemed very convincing in the Sixties or the Eighties, but the magic of the

number 2000 will create a more powerful illusion. On 1 January that year, even the day before will seem like ancient history; it's the future that will fill our horizons. Christianity can easily be presented in that context as a relic of yesterday, whilst science and technology and the 101 ways we can now amuse ourselves to death can be proclaimed as tomorrow's world.

How, then, can Christians demonstrate that true religion is a thing of the present and the future, where we should go and not just where we have come from? Perhaps the most effective exhibition at the turn of the millennium would be for the churches to sell off everything not essential to the practice of the faith – all the pomp and the palaces and the accumulated treasure of centuries of not obeying the teachings of Jesus – and use the proceeds to write off Mozambique's foreign debt. And perhaps they could do it in 2001. It would give the rest of us a year to observe, once the glittering surface of the new millennium is a little scratched, that human nature never changes. And nor does the challenge of the Sermon on the Mount.

• *Faith & Reason* is edited by Paul Valley

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £4.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number. The OBITUARIES e-mail address is obituaries@independent.co.uk

Lectures

TODAY
National Gallery: Rebecca Drew, "Home and Heath (III): Velázquez, Kitchen Scene with Christ in the House of Martha and Mary", 12pm.
Victoria and Albert Museum: Alex Buck, "Craft and Guild Workshops 1860-1920", 2.30pm.
Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Five Thousand Words on Minimalism", 1pm.
British Museum: Delia Pemberton, "A Journey Through the Underworld: ancient Egyptian views of the afterlife", 1.15pm.
National Portrait Gallery: Paul Webb, "Victorian Theatrical and Musical Personalities", 3pm.

Changing of the Guard
TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment presents the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. Nijmegen Colonial Grenadier Guards presents the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, both preceded by the Irish Guards. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment presents the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am.

Birthdays

TODAY: Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Consultant and Chargé de Mission to the UN Secretary-General, 65; Mr Muhammad Ali, former boxing champion, 56; Sir John Boyd, former ambassador to Japan, 62; Lord Carter, Government Chief Whip in the House of Lords, 65; Mr Christopher Cribbie, ambassador to Romania, 52; Sir Mervyn Davies, former High Court Judge, 80; Sir Edward Fessenden, radar pioneer, 86; Mrs Monica Furlong, writer, 68; Mr Neil Gamble, Headmaster, Ender School, 55; Mr Damian Green MP 41; Mlle Françoise Hardy, singer and songwriter, 54; Mr Anthony Kenney, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, 56; The Right Rev Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Wakefield, 56; Mr Kenneth Minton, chairman, John Mowlem, 61; Sir Geoffrey Patten, former MP, 62; Professor William Robertson, pathologist, 75; Mr Vidal Sassoon, hair stylist, 70; Miss Moira Shearer, former ballerina, 72; Mr Richard Smethurst, Provost, Worcester College, Oxford, 57; Sir Clyde Walcott, Chairman, International Cricket Council, 72; Dame Gillian Weir, concert organist, 57; Mr Paul Young, singer, 42. **TOMORROW:** Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, 65; Air Marshal Sir Alfred Ball, 77; Mr Peter Beardsley, footballer, 37; Dr David Bellamy, botanist, 65; Sir Michael Bett, First Civil Service Commissioner, 63; Mr John Boorman, film director, 65; Mr Raymond Briggs, author and illustrator, 64; Mr David Burke, Chief Constable, North Yorkshire, 59; Mr John Carr, former Chairman, Countryside Commission of Scotland, 71; Mr Iain Coleman MP, 39; Mr Kevin Costner, actor, 43; Mr Richard Dumwoody, jockey,

34; Mr Christian Fittipaldi, racing driver, 27; The Hon Sir Rocco Forte, former chairman, Forte, 53; Mr Paul Freeman, actor, 65; Lord Goodhart QC, 65; Mr David Grant, former Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Durham, 76; Miss Dawn Guinness, former Headmistress, Felstead College, 52; Sir James Hann, chairman, Hickson International, 65; Sir William Harding, former MP, 60; Lord Higgins, former MP, 70; Mr John Hougham, Chairman, Acaas, 61; Lord Howell of Guildford, former government minister, 62; Mr John Hume MP, 61; Mr Edward James, former diplomat, 81; Dame Jennifer Jenkins, former Chairman, the National Trust, 77; Mr Paul Keating, former prime minister of Australia, 54; Mr Martin Laing, chairman, John Laing, 56; Sir Godfrey Le Quesne, Judge of Courts of Appeal, Jersey and Guernsey, 74; Mr Mark Rylance, artistic director, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, 38; Sir Walter Verner, former Secretary, Order of the Garter, 91; Sir Ralph Verney, former Vice-Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, 83; Sir Clive Whitmore, former Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, 63; Sir Alan Whitmore, former director, Exchange and Trade Relations Department, IMF, New York, 72.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Anne Brontë ("Acton Bell"), novelist, 1820; Al (Alphonse) Capone, gangster, 1899. Deaths: Tomaso Giovanni Albini, composer, 1751. Today is the Feast Day of St Antony the Abbot, St Genulf or Genou, St Julian Sabas, St Richmir, St Sabina of Piacenza, Saints Seneppius, Eleusippus and Metestippus and St Sulpicius II or Sulpice of Bourges.

MARKET REPORT

Flight to quality sends blue chips soaring



DEREK PAIN

Shares, at least the blue-chip variety, were given every encouragement to put on an impressive display—and did not disappoint.

With Asian markets looking stronger, New York putting on a positive show and the monthly futures expiry going so smoothly it was almost unnoticed the stock market was confident and relaxed.

The so called "flight to quality", prompted by Asian alarms, has directed even more attention on blue chips, particularly those with little, if any, Asian exposure.

In busy trading Footsie surged 111.0 points to 5,277.2, its first century for five weeks. At the close the score had been trimmed to 97.3 at 5,263.1.

Vodafone, reflecting a mixture of trading and take over hopes, led the blue chip charge with a 34p jump to 483p. But it was a pitiful time for the constituents of the FTSE 250 index.

The blame for their lackluster performance was laid, rightly or wrongly, at the door of the market makers of BZW.

They had been told to end the week, it was alleged, with balanced books and found themselves forced to cut some of their positions.

With BZW, now part of Credit Suisse First Boston and suffering the indignity of redundancies, such manoeuvres are distinctly possible.

Groups with extensive Far Eastern exposures also missed the party. Rolls-Royce dived 7.5p to 206p and British Aerospace was lowered 11p to 1.605p. BTR found yet another new low, off 5.75p to 160p and engineer Siebe gave up 47p to .047p.

Retailers had a mixed time with Argos registering disappointment with its festive display, falling 63p to 442p, lowest for two years.

cline continued, down 6p to 30p. In the summer of 1996 the price touched 219p as hopes bloomed that new chief execu-

Said one dealer: "Investors are bailing out while the company

is still in business". Dixons remained depressed on its sales misadventure, falling a further 7p to 498p. The shares have lost 84p since Wednesday's downbeat

Supermarkets had another eventful session with Asda jumping 8p to 195p in heavy trading. Take over rumours continued to swirl but the activity could have been due to the futures expiry. There was also talk of IIS buying interest.

Safeway, Asda's suspected target, added 11.25p to 366p and Tesco hardened 11p to 512p. On Monday it will become the first major supermarket chain to pronounce on Christmas trading.

The fledgling IT sector had another rip roaring session as fund managers were forced to increase their exposure. Logi-

ca jumped 77.5 to a 1,287.5p peak and Sage 35p to 952.5p. Disappointing figures from City Centre Restaurants took a 15 5p bite out of the shares at

WPP, the advertising group, responded to a Merrill Lynch upgrading with a 9p advance to 25 1/2p.

Share spotlight
share price, pence

The graph shows Logica's share price in pence from 1997 to 2000. The y-axis ranges from 1000 to 1300 pence. The price starts at approximately 950p in 1997, rises to 1000p in 1998, and then surges to over 1200p by 2000.

Year	Share Price (pence)
1997	950
1998	1000
1999	1100
2000	1250

Source: Datastream

Rentokil Initial, the environmental and property services group, hardened 9.5p to 295p as Sophus Berendsen, the Danish

company which once had a controlling stake, split itself into two. SB retains the trading activities, ranging from electronics to textile services, and 36

company, Ratin, which like SB will be quoted on the Copenhagen stock market, will hold 32.2 per cent of Rentokil. Fears

On the take over front Sibir Energy improved 3.5p to 44p as Pentex, which has 40 per cent, opened bid talks with the Siberian oil explorer because it has

Manchester Utd. was the subject of heavy turnover with

the shares closing a little firmer at 158p. Volume was nearly 17 million with some chunky lines going through at around 155p.

BTG, the old British Technology Group which is working on a multitude of developments and inventions, including revolutionary search-

The day's biggest casualty

was Compagnie de Participations Financieres, a Luxembourg registered company operating in the German property industry. One of the more obscure AIM shares, it jumped 190p to 307.5p after bitter dispute between the board and the company's main

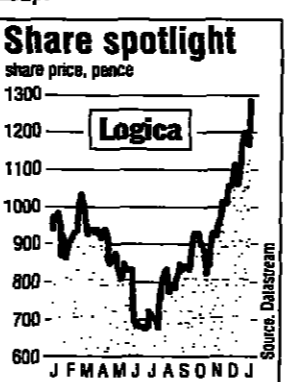
ard and the company's main shareholder came into the open. Two directors have quit and the rest will depart after a shareholders meeting next month. It came to AIM just over a year ago.

TAKING STOCK

Nord Anglia, the education group, jumped 39p to a 319p peak, after buying a New Zealand college. The shares arrived a year ago at 140p, falling to 132.5p before starting their surge. The company should be a beneficiary of the Government's privatisation plans for failed schools. Stockbroker Henry Cooke Lumsden is bullish. It forecasts profits of £2.7m this year with £3.1m slotted in for the following year.

Ankett Associates, a building design practice, improved 0.5p to 5.5p as directors, including chairman Gerry Deighton, purchased 300,000 shares. Stockbroker Ellis & Partners forecast earning per share will increase from 0.56p to 0.71p this year.

Robert Earl, the restaurant tycoon who runs Planet Hollywood, has cut his stake in Pemberton's, the wine bar chain, to below 3 per cent. The shares held at 17.25n.

[illegible]

Poor Christmas at Argos prompts job cutbacks

Argos, the catalogue retailer, is cutting 230 jobs as part of a 'fundamental review of costs' after it reported disappointing Christmas sales for the second year running. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports on the decline of a former stock market star.

Argos shares fell by 12.5 per cent yesterday after the company said like for like sales in the five weeks to 27 December fell by 1.5 per cent. The company blamed a poor performance in toys, electricals and the jewellery/clocks and watches category. Sales in these three ranges, which account for half of Argos' sales in the run-up to Christmas, fell by five per cent on last year. Argos shares closed 63p lower at 442p. They stood at almost 800p little more than a year ago.

Analysts said Argos had also suffered from a revitalised Woolworths which competes directly against it in areas such as toys. The figures were particularly disappointing, as Argos had added more sales staff this year to prevent the long queues that caused the company problems last Christmas, analysts said.

"It has raised significant concerns both in the City and within the company itself," said Ashley Thomas at SG Securities. "The fact that they are planning a series

of initiatives suggests the tougher trading conditions are here to stay."

Argos is just the latest in a string of downbeat announcements from retailers this week, suggesting that the early post-Christmas optimism from the high street was misplaced. There have been profits warnings from Laura Ashley and La Senza as well as poor figures from Sears and House of Fraser.

Some said the downbeat trading update would increase pressure on the company to return its cash pile to shareholders rather than gear up for an acquisition. "Given they are operating in a mature market, people may like to see some cash coming back," said one analyst.

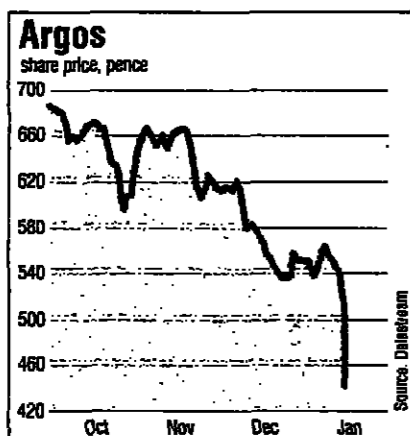
Argos had average net cash of £137m last year. It returned £93m to shareholders in 1996 through a 40p per share special dividend.

As part of cost cutting programme designed to free up resources for investment elsewhere in the group, Argos is to cut 100 jobs at its Milton Keynes head office and 130 at its Welwyn Garden City warehouse, which is being closed. However, the company is to create 1,000 jobs this year as part of a programme to open 31 new shops.

It also plans to pilot a home shopping service in August. Under this system, any product in stock can be ordered and paid for over the telephone and delivered to the customers' home or picked up at the shop within 24 hours of ordering. Argos home shopping service will be rolled out nationally in 1999. The service is expected to be loss-making this year but to turn in a profit in its first full year of operation. Additional costs will be incurred for new telephone systems, a call centre and a delivery network.

Analysts downgraded this year's profits from £146m to around £125m, after exceptional. For the following year some have downgraded from £165m to £140m.

The company said 1997's profits would be affected by investments in its new Dutch business, costing £3m, and £7m of additional provisions related to the cost-cutting exercise. This is expected to reduce costs by £7m a year.



An executive from Asda yesterday held a meeting with the supermarket's suppliers - Proctor & Gamble and Liver Brothers - in the lavatories of the Majestic Hotel in Harrogate. The facilities at the hotel have won an award for high standards
Photograph: Nigel Hillier/UNP

PIA 'names and shames' five firms

Five leading firms offering independent financial advice were "named and shamed" by the Personal Investment Authority, the industry's watchdog, yesterday.

The action came as Helen Liddell, the Economic Secretary, warned that there would be no let-up in the quest for redress in the £4bn pensions mis-selling scandal.

The PIA's announcement, sparked by the apparent failure of the five companies to meet the latest regulatory deadline, was an embarrassment for two leading figures in UK financial services.

It was the second "naming and shaming" for DBS Financial, chaired by Ken Davy, once a PIA board member. Countrywide Independent, run by Jim Gaskin, also numbered among the five companies now potentially facing hefty PIA fines. Mr Gaskin is a former deputy chief executive of Fimbra, the financial services regulator.

Burns Anderson Independent, Financial Options and IFA Network were also named by the PIA.

All five firms apparently failed to meet the PIA's requirement that 90 per cent of priority cases should be resolved by the end of 1997.

Commenting on the announcement, Ms Liddell said companies failing to meet deadlines "must face the consequences". She warned there would be "no let-up" - from the Government or the regulators. Forty-one firms, including the five named yesterday, are being monitored by the Economic Secretary. These firms have now resolved over half the cases identified for review.

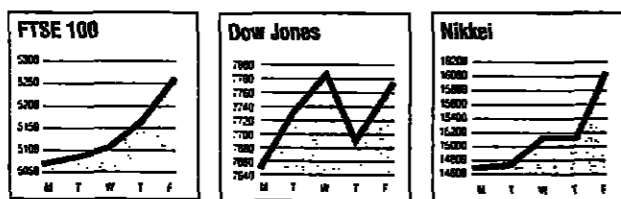
Separately, the Association of British Insurers (ABI) announced yesterday that five product providers had failed to meet mis-selling deadlines.

Guardian Royal Exchange, Reliance Mutual, Royal Liver, GAN Life and Sun Life of Canada failed to resolve 90 per cent of top priority cases by the end of 1997. But regulatory action is unlikely as the five product providers only narrowly missed targets and had made strenuous efforts to meet regulatory deadlines.

To date, the pensions review has led the PIA to impose fines totalling £2m. DBS Financial, one of the five financial adviser firms named yesterday, was fined £425,000 last September and said yesterday "every reasonable endeavour has been made to comply with the PIA's timetable".

- Leo Paterson

STOCK MARKETS



*Dow Jones index and graph at 5pm

Index	Close	Change	Change%	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield%
FTSE 100	5263.10	97.30	1.88	5267.30	4153.20	3.41
FTSE 250	4812.60	-3.70	-0.08	4983.80	4384.20	3.27
FTSE 350	2521.90	37.60	1.51	2570.50	2083.70	3.38
FTSE All Share	2461.58	34.78	1.43	2507.68	2055.17	3.36
FTSE SmallCap	2356.00	6.00	0.26	2407.40	2182.10	2.99
FTSE Realind	1281.00	4.30	0.34	1348.50	1225.20	3.29
FTSE AIM	977.90	-0.50	-0.05	1138.00	865.90	1.09
Dow Jones	7777.71	65.50	1.11	9298.00	6558.78	1.76
Nikkei	16046.45	924.47	6.11	20810.70	14498.21	0.95
Hong Kong	8900.04	321.08	3.74	16820.31	7909.13	4.77
Dax	4184.46	36.12	0.87	4459.89	2970.45	1.76

INTEREST RATES

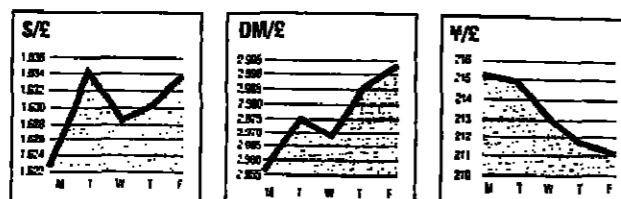


Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr	1 yr	10 year	10 year	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.61	1.24	7.83	0.81	6.06	1.34	5.04
US	5.83	0.06	5.86	-0.28	5.52	-1.04	5.04
Japan	0.72	0.23	0.68	0.13	1.91	-0.69	2.54
Germany	3.56	0.43	3.82	0.62	5.06	-0.65	5.68

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls
Vodafone Grp 483.00 34.00 7.57	Argos 442.00 -63.00 -12.48
Real Westminster 1070.00 74.00 7.43	McKesson 395.50 -43.50 -9.91
Logica 1287.50 77.50 6.40	BICC 205.5 -20 -8.97
BTG 722.50 40.00 5.86	BICC 144 -13.5 -8.97

CURRENCIES



Pound	1 Jan	Change	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
Dollar	1.6339	+0.38c	1.6574	0.0235	1.44p	0.5997
D-Mark	2.9928	+0.88pt	2.6785	0.3143	+0.22pt	1.5948
Yen	211.02	-11.65	195.73	-15.29	-7.29	116.57
2 index	104.90	+0.10	4.88	Base Rates	7.25	6.00

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	Close	Change	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
Bond 01 (S)	14.73	-0.11	23.24	GDP	113.90	3.70 109.84
Gold (S)	285.40	2.70	354.55	RPI	160.00	3.60 154.44
Silver (S)	5.89	0.10	4.88	Base Rates	7.25	6.00

www.bloomberg.com source: Bloomberg

Battle expected to delay launch of competition in electricity industry

John Battle, the energy minister, is next week expected to announce a delay of up to six months to the launch of competition in the domestic electricity market. Michael Harrison reports on the latest setback in plans to liberalise the sector.

Mr Battle is to meet the heads of the 12 regional electricity companies (Recs) and the two Scottish power producers on Thursday to consider a report from PA Consulting, the advisers to Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator.

The report is widely expected to conclude that he has no option but to delay the launch of competition because of problems with computer systems and the failure of a

large number of Rees to be ready on time.

The original timetable envisaged competition beginning in April in a limited number of areas and then being phased in throughout the country by September.

It is now possible that the none of the country's 23 million electricity consumers will be able to start shopping around for suppliers until September at the earliest. If the system is not ready in April then financial penalties, levied by Professor Littlechild, will come into effect.

An argument has been raging within the industry as to whether the delay should be three or six months. However, all but two of the Rees, Eastern and Seaboard, have told PA Consulting that competition should be delayed until September in order to ensure that the computer systems have been properly tested.

Eastern and Seaboard, along with Yorkshire and Man-

web, are the four areas of the country where competition is due to be introduced first. The cities selected are Hull, Chester, Canterbury and Norwich.

But both Manweb, which is owned by Scottish Power and serves Merseyside and North Wales, and Yorkshire, are thought now to have recommended a delay of six months.

One option for Mr Battle and Professor Littlechild is to announce a six-month delay but set a deadline of Christmas for the full phasing-in of competition, so ensuring that all households get a chance to shop around this year.

Those Rees arguing for a delay until September say that even then, it will only give the industry three to four months to test out a computer system that would normally need at least a year to bed down.

They also argue that Professor Littlechild and Mr Battle will be anxious not to have to delay the launch date more

than once. "We are all desperate to see competition work but it is not in anybody's interests to be macho," said one executive.

However, John Devaney, chief executive of Eastern, said: "Three months should be the maximum allowed. If you go for six months then you will get people re-inventing the wheel."

A meeting of the Rees took place last Monday to review the position but at that point the final PA report had not been written. It is expected to be completed next Monday or Tuesday.

A six-month delay would infuriate Centrica, the trading arm of British Gas. It has seen its market share steadily eroded as electricity companies enter the liberalised gas market and is eager to strike back by attacking their markets.

Centrica has called for electricity suppliers which are not ready for competition to be prevented from entering the gas market.

Deep Pan Pizza chain hit by upmarket dining trend

Pizza is proving a turn-off for restaurant goers who are choosing to splash out money on expensive and ever more exotic meals.

The trend has forced City Centre Restaurants (CCR), owner of the Deep Pan Pizza chain, to warn that profits for the year to December will fall short of market expectations, causing the shares to fall 15.5p to 133p.

The poor trading performance has prompted the group to restructure the division. James Naylor, chief executive of CCR, plans to sell or rebrand many of the group's 55 high street sites as part of a strategy to take the group up-market.

Mr Naylor said yesterday: "There has been a drift away from pizza and eating in high street restaurants over the last few years. People have been spending more and trying different things."

CCR confirmed that several potential buyers have already expressed an interest in

some of the Deep Pan sites. Eventually most of the high street stores could disappear. The rest are likely to be refurbished to give them a more modern feel and the chain's name could also be changed.

"Deep Pan Pizza has become a bit dated," admitted Mr Naylor.

Despite CCR's disappointing trading figures, Scott Charlesworth, managing director of its Caffè Uno chain, is in line for a huge profit-related bonus. He will receive £800,000 this year on top of a £100,000 pay out last year. Mr Naylor confirmed he is on course to make another £800,000 this year.

Garfunkels and Chiquitos, the Mexican eateries, also grew strongly in the year and, ignoring Deep Pan Pizza, like-for-like sales in December rose 5.8 per cent.

CCR is planning to roll out Wok Wok, its new chain offering Asian delicacies, and is looking at at least one new restaurant concept.

- Andrew Yates

WH Smith provides for directors' golden parachutes

WH Smith has changed the terms of its directors' service contracts to grant them golden parachutes if the company is taken over.

The move, which may attract the ire of its investors, means that the most senior directors, such as new chief executive Richard Handover, could receive payments of up to £800,000. Mr Handover is on a two-year contract of around £400,000 a year. Other, more recently appointed, directors such as WH Smith Retail managing director Beverley Hodson, have contracts of just one year. John Hancock, the head of the US business, is also on a two-year contract and would qualify for more than £300,000.

The company justified the payments saying it was "simply bringing Smith's into line with current practice." A spokesman

cited other companies such as Cadbury Schweppes, Kingfisher, Barclays Bank and Pearson, saying they all have similar arrangements.

The changes were made last year and reported in WH Smith's accounts published in July. This was just two months before Tim Waterstone made his audacious £1bn approach to the company which would have seen him installed as chairman.

A WH Smith spokesman said the payments for loss of office were an additional incentive for the directors to not to abandon the company during a takeover situation. The company declined to comment on whether large pay packages, bonus payments and share option schemes did not already provide sufficient incentive.

- Nigel Cope

Allied braces for knock-out bid from US rival Hercules

Allied Colloids, the speciality chemicals group, yesterday predicted that profits for the year to March would rise by more than one-third to £74m and forecasted annual cost savings of £11.5m in its last final defence against a £1.1bn hostile bid from Hercules, its US rival.

However, analysts were predicting that the group was unlikely to retain its independence and that Hercules is preparing to make a knock-out bid for the group by upping its 155p a share offer to around 170p.

David Farrar, chief executive of Allied Colloids, said: "We have a great growth record. The problem is that in the past we have focused on growth rather than profit. In the two and a half years I have been in charge

there has been a huge change in culture."

Allied Colloids claims it should be valued by the market at 174p a share, despite the fact that its shares were languishing at around 115p before the bid.

Hercules branded the defence "uninspiring" and claimed that profit forecasts were exactly in line with analysts' predictions. A spokesman

for the group said yesterday: "They are not promising jam today. It is not even jam tomorrow. It is jam the day after that. Claims that they should be valued by the market at 174p are laughable."

Allied could look for a white knight or even consider a management buy-out if Hercules increases its bid.

- Andrew Yates

Diageo set to reveal Far East turmoil has damaged profits

Diageo, the new drinks giant formed by the merger of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan, is expected to announce on Monday that financial turmoil in the Far East will have a severe effect on profits. The warning will come as the group unveils its first ever trading statement.

Analysts believe the problems in Asia will turn out to have a much bigger impact on earnings than first thought as the crisis spreads throughout the continent and threatens to dampen economic growth.

The Far East contributes up to 10 per cent of Diageo's profits. However demand for spirits such as whisky has fallen

as the financial crisis has bitten and there is evidence of customers switching to cheaper, lower margin spirits brands. The continued slump in the value of Far Eastern currencies will also reduce earnings in pound terms. The brokers Société Générale have knocked £35m off profit forecasts for the year to

June. The cuts mirror moves by other analysts who have reduced earnings estimates by as much as £70m over the next few years.

One drinks analyst said: "Diageo is expected to confirm analysts' predictions that its problems in the Far East have escalated."

- Andrew Yates



JEREMY WARNER ON WHY THE US HAS FAILED TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF BILL GATES

How the American dream has come unstuck

There was an excellent piece in the New Yorker magazine this week about the US Justice Department's battle with Microsoft. Timed to coincide with renewed court hearings over whether Microsoft is abusing its position in the Internet browser market, this was the definitive article on the monopoly Bill Gates has managed to establish in personal computer operating system technology, and the way in which he is using this to dominate other key areas of the PC software market.

Up until very recently few have had anything but praise for Mr Gates. In the US he is an icon, the very personification of the American dream and the global triumph of American technology and its free market capitalist system.

Until recently that is. Now that image is beginning to sour, and in the process policy makers have begun to question why it is that both the self-correcting mechanisms of the free market, and America's impressive battery of anti-trust and competition laws, have been unequal to the task of checking the growing power of the Microsoft machine.

Worse, they wonder whether Mr Gates, for so long the man who seemed to epitomise the cutting edge of technology, is not now beginning to act as a brake on technological development and change. And if that's the case, is there not a danger of the US eventually losing its present undisputed lead in computer technology and sales?

Before trying to answer these questions, it is worth making some general points about the nature of businessmen and monopolies. There is nothing particularly odd, new or surprising about the way Mr Gates operates or behaves. It would be wrong to view him, as some do, as an evil genius astride a war like empire set on world domination. That may once have been the model for the successful monopoly enterprise, but it isn't these days. In any case, Mr Gates isn't like that and nor is his company. On the other hand, nobody would quarrel with the contention that he has been particularly ruthless and single minded in the way he has developed, defended and exploited an original great new idea and market opportunity. This is what successful entrepreneurs do.

In a sense, it is the function of business to aspire to monopoly, for that is where the greatest likelihood of survival and spectacular profits lies. Businessmen who fail to keep upmost in their minds that their whole endeavour should be bent on trouncing the competition, invariably end up getting trounced themselves.

Mr Gates, then, belongs to a glorious (or not so glorious depending on your point of view) tradition of inspired and highly successful businessmen, stretching from John Rockefeller in the late 1800s through Cecil Rhodes in the early part of the century to Rupert Murdoch today. On present showing, Microsoft looks as if it will out-mopolise all these role models.

Monopoly can be achieved in a number of ways. The simplest is to buy it, either by acquiring the competition or by driving it out of business through price cutting - a method known as predatory pricing. In the developed world at least, the first of these routes is now more or less outlawed, though some big companies do still seem to get their consolidating mergers through regulators. The competition authorities both in the US and Europe are also getting better at stamping out predatory pricing, though again there is perhaps a way to go, particularly in Britain.

New industries and technologies offer the opportunity of an entirely different approach to monopoly. Copyright is a tradition as ancient as commerce itself. Hardly anyone would seriously dispute an inventor's right to profit from his own discovery, so international law has rightly been constructed to offer cast iron protection. What this does is to give the inventing individual or company an effective monopoly over the product, at least for a limited period of time. Generally, however, it's not long before the competition comes up with a new and hopefully better version of the same thing.

The trick that Mr Gates managed to pull off was to make his MS-DOS operating system, originally designed for IBM's onslaught on the personal computer market, into what became the industry standard. After that came Windows 95, which has piggy backed off MS-DOS into the same position. Mr

Gates has thus achieved the holy grail of all entrepreneurs, for once the industry standard, everyone has to buy your product even when there are better and cheaper versions in prospect. The market has in effect been locked up. Mr Gates has achieved this, moreover, in the world's fastest growing industry, personal computers.

Quite how he managed it has been the subject of more column inches than the Gulf War. In part, it was simply the snowball effect. Because high tech goods have to be compatible with each other, a product can sweep all before it once a certain critical mass has been achieved. More and more other software products become captive to that standard, making it more invaluable still. Anyone with children who has gone the Apple Mac route to the desktop computer must be only too aware, for instance, of the impossibility of getting the latest wizzo computer games in anything other than Windows compatible form.

There is nothing illegal in any of this, but clearly it profoundly distorts the way in which free markets are meant to work. Arguably, there were better alternatives, both to MS-DOS and Windows, but none has come to occupy anything more than a small niche position. Obviously, there's something wrong here, but there's nothing either the market or regulators can do about it. Instead, the Justice Department has chosen to attack Microsoft on its attempt to lock up another area of the market, Internet

browsers. Even before Microsoft launched Internet Explorer, there were growing signs of overtly anti-competitive behaviour.

With Explorer, it became much more contentious. What Microsoft did was directly to link its Explorer product with Windows, so that you could not have Windows without Explorer. Most browsers, which act as a gateway to the Web, are in effect given away, both by Microsoft and rivals. Even so, it is clear what Microsoft is up to here. The strategy is that of maintaining control over all aspects of the desktop, thereby preventing competitors from getting a foot in the door.

In the end, it is for the US authorities to deal with Mr Gates and the threat he poses to the free market system. We all have to use them, but these are almost exclusively US technologies, and it is primarily America's lookout if it fails urgently to address the problem. Obviously we are affected, however. And there is a parallel in Britain, if an inexact one. Rupert Murdoch's TV encryption technology occupies a similar position in subscription TV to that of Microsoft with the PC - you cannot offer pay TV without using his system. The consequent opportunity for abuse is obvious, though to be fair, there is as yet no evidence of him using it. As long as capitalism continues to flourish, there will always be those who aspire to monopoly. What governments and regulators have to be eternally vigilant in remembering is that monopoly is also capitalism's greatest enemy.

Tokyo stock market rises 6 per cent in mini-recovery

The Japanese yen rose and the Tokyo stock market staged a mini-recovery yesterday, rising more than 6 per cent, on renewed hopes that the government would take measures to boost the economy. Stephen Vines reports from Hong Kong.

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) ended its annual convention yesterday with its leaders firmly focused on the need for measures to inject new life in the economy.

Newspaper reports suggested that this would be translated into a new package of stimulus measures to be enacted in a special March budget. The measures are reported to include further income tax cuts and increased spending on public works. It appears that the government will focus more on reflation of the economy than on its previous concern with balancing the budget.

The LDP issued a statement saying: "In line with the determination expressed by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto that Japan will never trigger a global economic recession, we will continue to promptly carry out all possible measures to stabilise the financial system and achieve economic recovery."

The convention also applauded a suggestion that Japanese corporations should be allowed to undertake a mass revaluation of their land holdings, something which has not been done for over two decades. The object would be to provide increased collateral against which banks could either lend more or adjust their existing loans without having to lower borrowing limits.

Although this proposal appears to be very much in the spirit of shuffling the deck chairs on the deck of the Titanic, its ingenuity caught the imagination of investors who are preoccupied by fears of massive corporate defaults on loans.

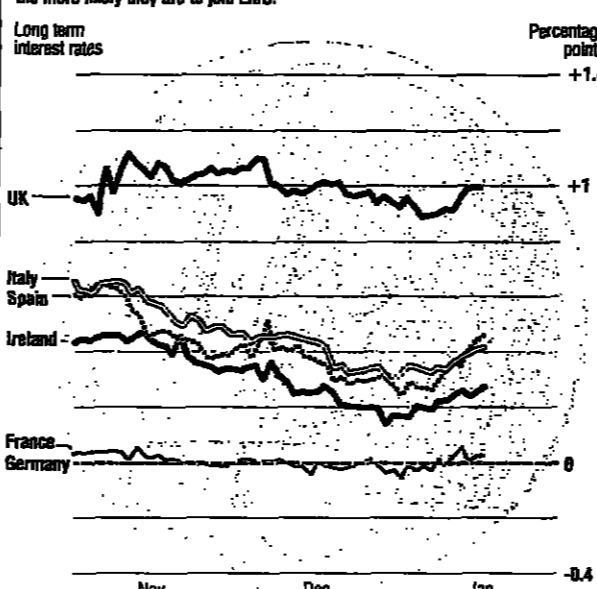
Interestingly, there were signs that foreign buyers had re-entered the Japanese market with enthusiasm yesterday after a period when they had been notable by their absence. News of foreign buying, enhanced by a steady improvement in the value of the yen, encouraged domestic investors to come in behind the overseas investors.

While bank shares rose strongly yesterday, Moody's, the US-based credit-rating agency, injected a mood of caution into the industrial sector by issuing a downgrade on the debt rating of the giant Mitsubishi Motors Corp.

Meanwhile, four former executives of Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank pleaded guilty to illegally giving money to a corporate racketeer as they admitted they had paid him off to ensure that the bank's shareholder meetings proceeded smoothly. The executives are charged with funneling 11.78bn yen (£55.6m) in 52 payments to Ryuichi Koike from July 1994, to September 1995, through a corporate affiliate.

Who will be in EMU? The financial markets' view

The closer other countries get to the dashed baseline (Germany) the more likely they are to join EMU.



TOWARDS EMU: If the line moves towards the German base line it means investors no longer require such a high premium for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident the currency won't devalue against the mark. In other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in 10 years' time.

AWAY FROM EMU: However, if they think the country won't be in EMU, that it will have higher inflation, and that there is a risk of a future devaluation against the mark, then they will demand an extra premium for holding that country's bonds, so the line will move away from the base.

When will EMU start? The City Analysts' View.

The Independent asked analysts from: Nikko Europe, Paine Webber, ABN Amro, JP Morgan, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, HSBC James Capel, UBS what probability they placed on EMU starting on time

Probability EMU starts on time	87%	(86% last week)
Probability EMU is delayed	10%	(10.5% last week)
Probability EMU never happens	3%	(3.5% last week)

EMU chances take on fresh impetus

The prospects for European Monetary Union emerged from the shadows this week as the Asian economies showed signs of recovery.

The spreads between German mark, securities and some of the smaller European currencies have widened slightly, reversing the long-term trend to convergence, but not enough to cause any real concern, and the view of the experts is increasingly that it is too late now to prevent the narrow EMU going ahead and political risk to stop the broad EMU, containing Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Bundesbank officials continue to warn everyone against complacency, but a legal move to have the German courts rule that replacing the mark is unconstitutional is unlikely to succeed and has not had much impact on the markets.

The simmering row between the Dutch and Italians is slightly more serious. But reports that for political reasons the Dutch Finance Minister would oppose Italian membership of the monetary union in the first wave have been played down in the past week.

- Clifford German

CSFB lays off 30 BZW staff following bank purchase

Credit Suisse First Boston (CSFB), the Swiss-American bank, laid off 30 BZW staff in London yesterday. The employees were the first UK casualties of CSFB's purchase of parts of BZW, the investment banking arm of Barclays Bank, last November. A further 150 BZW staff are understood to have been called in for "consultation interviews" to discuss their future, and more redundancies are expected. CSFB said yesterday redundancies would not automatically follow for those called to consultation interviews, but admitted only those staff not called to interview could regard their jobs as secure.

Efficiency cuts at Christie's

Christie's International, the auction house locked in takeover talks with a group of investors led by investment bank SBC Warburg, is laying off 57 staff in the UK and the US as part of its plans to "improve efficiency". The cuts are part of an ongoing review of Christie's operations, and City sources dismissed suggestions that the group was trying to squeeze a better price out of its suitors, who are understood to be carrying out due diligence on the company.

Shares soar in Lorient deal

Shares in Lorient jumped 26p to 559p after the consultancy group unveiled a partnership deal with Baan, the fast-growing Dutch software house. The agreement makes Lorient one of Baan's five UK partners, with exclusive rights to implement the company's Enterprise Resource Planning software in the process manufacturing industry.

Safeway raises bank stakes

Safeway has raised the stakes in the telephone banking war with a new account that will pay up to 7.4 per cent interest on balances over £2,500. The instant access account will be launched on Monday in conjunction with Abbey National. It will pay interest of 6.75 per cent on balances over £500 and 7.3 per cent on balances over £1,000.

National Savings down

Savers put £109m into National Savings in December, bringing the total for the first nine months of the financial year to £1.07bn, compared to £1.3bn at the same stage the previous year. Premium Bonds attracted a net £101m, index-linked certificates £42m and Pensioners' Bonds £25m.

Marlborough takeover

Marlborough International, Ireland's largest recruitment company, has agreed to a reverse takeover of Walker Hamill of the UK for about £17.6m. Marlborough asked for its shares to be suspended pending shareholder approval of the acquisition. Walker Hamill, which is privately owned, specialises in placing accountants, MBAs and strategy consultants, and has offices in London, Reading and Australia.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
British Biotech (B)	2.50m (2.38m)	0.184m (0.123m)	3.1p (3.2p)	0 (+)
Caspar Communication (C)	31.51m (32.64m)	0.519m (0.713m)	1.58p (2.2p)	0 (+)
(P) - Final (I) - Interim				

Peking stands firm behind HK dollar peg

China's central banker yesterday insisted Peking would not devalue the mainland's currency and was standing firm behind Hong Kong's defence of its dollar peg.

The blunt public pronouncements were aimed both at international financiers and opinion at home, where the Asian financial turmoil has caused a slide in the black market value of the renminbi. Dai Xianglong, governor of the People's Bank of China, made the most forthright pledge yet that the Chinese government would not devalue its currency in response to the Asian financial meltdown. A renminbi de-

valuation was "out of the question. We don't have a reason to devalue, nor are we willing to devalue", he said.

The commitment comes ahead of today's arrival in Peking of Michel Camdessus, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, whose bail-out programmes for other Asian countries would be undermined by any Chinese depreciation.

Repeated promises by Peking have failed to quell fears that China may decide to devalue its currency because of rising competition for its exports from south-east Asian countries. Mr Dai said that only 15 per cent of China's

exports were vulnerable to competition from south-east Asian countries.

Rumours of a renminbi devaluation put yet more pressure on the Hong Kong dollar peg to the US currency, which Peking is committed to maintaining. Mr Dai stressed that China's economy was robust. Economic growth will slow this year, he confirmed, but he was confident it would still reach 8 per cent, compared with 8.8 per cent in 1997. And the cause of the cooling was a slowdown in township and village enterprises, previously one of the engines of China's economic growth. The central banker

promised "very drastic measures" to restructure China's state banks, confirming that up to 25 per cent of domestic loans were non-performing, of which more than 5 per cent were non-recoverable.

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong the Hang Seng Index rose almost 4 per cent as fears of a default at Sino Group, the property developer, receded. Concern over the property giants was exacerbated by a decision by Moody's, the credit ratings agency, to downgrade British-controlled Swire Group, and Wharf. The pair saw their share price rise, probably reflecting the recent criticism of credit agencies for failing to predict the crisis.

GEC Yarrow safeguards jobs with £500m Brunei order

More than 2,000 jobs were safeguarded at the Clyde-side shipbuilder GEC Yarrow yesterday after the yard secured a £500m order for three offshore patrol vessels from the Sultan of Brunei, the world's richest man.

The contract will also provide work for scores of British sub-contractors including British Aerospace, which is expected to supply its Seawolf ship-to-air missile system as part of the package.

Work on the contract will begin next year when the Yarrow yard completes existing

contracts to build three Type 23 frigates for the Royal Navy and is expected to keep Yarrow busy for four years.

The yard is also hopeful of winning further export orders following its success in Brunei. South Africa has a similar requirement for offshore patrol vessels and other potential markets include the Gulf States and the Far East.

The vessels are virtually the size of frigates and can be used in a variety of roles ranging from fishery protection to disaster relief and offshore rescue.

- Michael Harrison

BUSINESS AND THE COURTS

JOHN WILLCOCK

Bill Gates's giant Microsoft Corporation is seeing legal action on a whole number of fronts the moment in the US. His week its took action of its won when it launched a writ against Taskmaster Computing Ltd and an individual, Roy Pique, of White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield in Dover, alleging copyright infringement.

Microsoft's writ says that on 27 October last year Taskmaster sold five products to a company called Lead Glass (Kent) which bore trademarks including Microsoft, Windows and Powerpoint, but which were not manufactured by Microsoft.

The giant software company has retained London-based law firm Linklaters to represent it and lodged a writ on Tuesday in the High Courts demanding an injunction against Taskmaster and damages, amongst other things.

Across the pond, Microsoft is itself facing an anti-trust case brought by the US Justice Department, which claims it is violating a 1995 consent decree by mak-

ing personal computer manufacturers "Bundle" its Internet browser with its Windows 95 product.

Nine US States have launched their own probes into whether the company is using anti-competitive practices. All of which is being contested by Microsoft.

I've been waiting to write a story headlined "Battle of the Urinals" for a long time. Some pungent litigation is due to reach court this spring between Greenhill Services of Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, and Washroom International, of Cliftonville, Kent.

Greenhill has an exclusive licence to all rights in a waterless urinal system called "WhiffAway", which industry analysts have tipped as a big future seller.

Last year Greenhill made an agreement with Washroom making the latter the exclusive distributor of the system in the UK and Europe for 10 years. Under the deal Washroom undertook not to sell rival systems. Now Greenhill is claiming that Washroom is mar-

keting a rival system, TO Waterfree Urinal System. Greenhill wants damages and an injunction against Washroom.

John Rhodes of Campbell Hooper is representing Greenhill and won an interlocutory order from Mr Justice Popplewell stopping Washroom from breaching the conditions of the contract.

This decision went to the Court of Appeal, where Sir John Balfour let the earlier injunction stand, saying that certain claims by Washroom had already been "pooh poohed" by a High Court judge.

How refreshing to see a senior member of the Judiciary expressing himself in such earthy terms.

Enso or Byfield, a Southampton firm, are representing Washroom. Oh, and if you want to see either of the rival urinals in action, I'm advised, go to any Granada motorway service station.

Richard Branson was being cross-examined yesterday in the libel case between the Virgin boss and Guy Snowden, founder and

head of GTEch, the American lottery contractor.

Throughout the case, which kicked off at the High Court this week, Mr Branson has been accompanied by his father, Ted Branson.

Mr Branson senior, 79, is a distinguished former barrister himself, and ended his career as a Stipendiary Magistrate. His success at the Bar enabled him to send young Richard to Stowe, the public school. Ted lives with his wife Eve Branson on the south coast, near Chichester. Ted's other claim to fame is that he is a former "desert rat". He fought with the British Army in North Africa during the second world war, and was decorated. Richard Branson is being represented by George Carman QC, while Mr Snowden has Richard Ferguson QC.

The case, which is expected to last four weeks, is being heard by Mr Justice Moreland, who heard the Jamie Bulger case.

A judgement is expected to be delivered next Wednesday over the Alan Clark

case, in which the former Government minister is seeking an injunction and damages against the London Evening Standard over the newspaper's spoof "Alan Clark Diary".

Geoffrey Hobbs QC, on Mr Clark's behalf, accused the paper of "false attribution of authorship". Meanwhile, this week the Evening Standard continued to publish the spoof diary pending the judgment.

Word reaches me of an intriguing writ lodged recently by the Ministry of Sound, the south-east London nightclub headed by Jamie Palumbo, against a Ms Cosgrave. Solicitors acting on behalf of the Elephant & Castle rave venue were reluctant to discuss the case, except to say that "Ms Cosgrave was offered the opportunity to answer the allegations through her solicitors prior to the commencement of proceedings, but [the Ministry] regarded the responses she provided as unsatisfactory." What allegations? I'll bring you the writ in full next week.





Pagan ritual: Two Morris dancers taking a rest during the Straw Bear Festival in Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, a 17th-century rite resurrected in 1980, in which a straw bear, as a mascot for a good harvest in coming years, is paraded around the town by folk dancers from all over the world. This photograph, by Jason Orton, was taken with a Nikon F90, using a 50mm lens on 800 Asa film, 1/250th of a second at f8. To order a print, price £15, telephone 0171-293 2534

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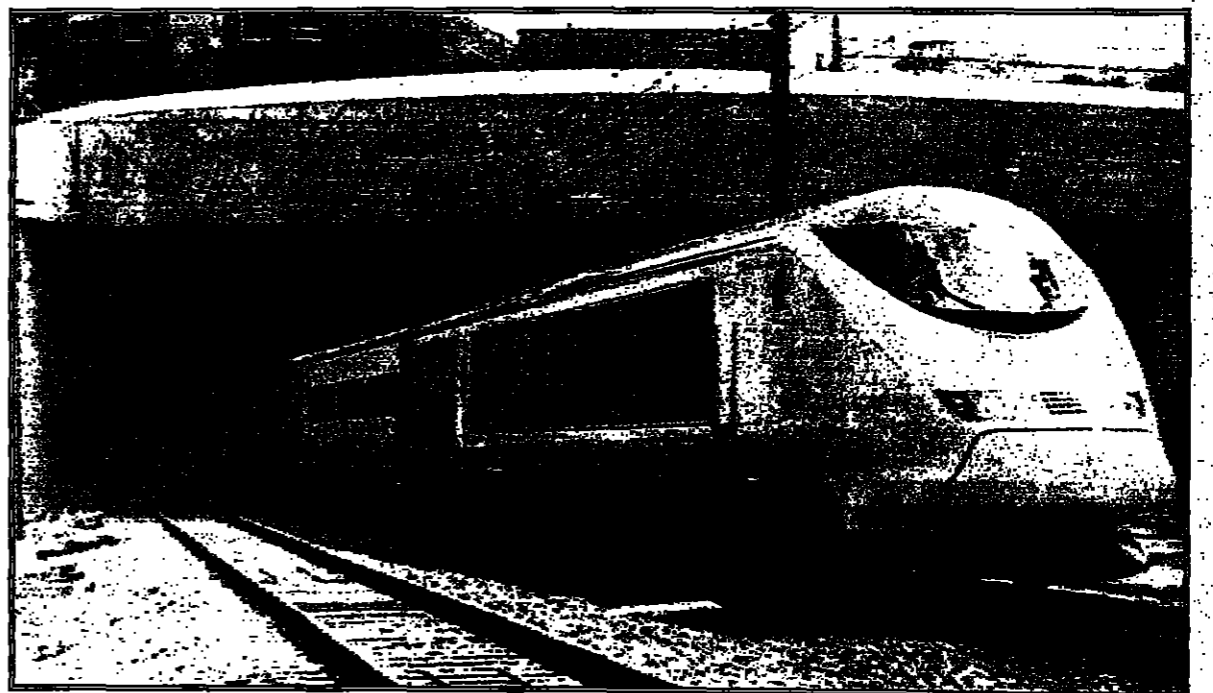
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TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 17 January 1998



Sacrifice at every step: at the festival of Thaipusam, the human peacocks must rise above their pain – spikes pierce bare chests and backs, cheeks and tongues are lanced with skewers

Photograph: Alain Evard/Rupert Harding Picture Library

Dirty dancing in Orchard Road

As human peacocks paraded through the streets and a carnival atmosphere came into full swing, Amar Grover discovered a very different face of Singapore.

This was not quite the Singapore one expected and, frankly, what a relief. I'd been hovering in a temple compound since the crack of dawn. Families clustered tightly as drastic things were done to brothers, sisters and friends. I made way for an unsteady young man in bright yellow swimming-trunks. A large, spoked frame was pinned to his torso. There were cheers and chanting. The human peacock stepped forward and embarked gingerly upon the strange road of Thaipusam.

This is the most flamboyant festival of Singapore's Hindu community. Each year on the day of the full moon in the month of Thai (late January or early February), thousands of devotees wind through four kilometres of the city's streets. Roads are blocked, traffic is di-

verted and even dirt makes a stately appearance. There are mounds of orchids and marigolds, sticky smashed coconuts and feverish incantations. But what really sets this spectacle apart are the kavadis.

Kavadi means, literally, "sacrifice at every step" and it surely feels just like that. Each human peacock sports a steel and aluminium cage-like frame weighing up to 20kg. Their elaborate plumage – feathers, tassels, flowers, inset pictures of idols – rests on shoulder pads yet is balanced by spikes that pierce bare chests and backs. Hooks and bars tug none too gently: cheeks and tongues are lanced with skewers. This is faith, not mind, over matter.

Thaipusam has its roots in Tamil India. Legend relates how a simple villager embarked on a journey to pay homage to Lord Subramaniam, son of the mighty god Shiva. Milk, pots of which weighed down his shoulders, was the only modest offering. It was an arduous trek and for this penance he was handsomely blessed.

Yet there is nothing remotely pastoral about today's

kavadi bearers, who are mostly urbane and unfreakish. The newspapers had sampled participants; a civil servant aged 61 (enduring this for the 30th year since being cured of cirrhosis of the liver); an insurance agent who had lost his cancerous leg, and was quoted as saying: "I keep thinking what God has done for me."

The thrust of all this display is atonement, to give thanks or fulfil vows made to Lord Sub-

ramaniam. Their everyday concerns – business prosperity, exam success, continued health or survival – are wrought larger than life. And just as reason appears suspended, pain is inhibited.

I asked about pain, but few clear answers were forthcoming. "Correct spiritual preparation is vital," lectured one young man. The peacocks fast and lead an abstinent life for at least three days, possibly a

month, before the great day. Pain may indicate that preparations were not up to par, and should it be unbearable ... well, the peacock is in serious trouble.

Devotees plus entourage had gathered overnight at the Perumal Temple. There were prayers and offerings before makeshift altars. With garlanded vases balanced on their heads, women initiated the day's procession to Chettiar

Temple. It is not a shy route: participants take in downtown Singapore, even skirting Orchard Road, a major shopping thoroughfare.

As drums throbbed erratically, I watched kavadis being adjusted. An ungainly fan of prongs must fit matching sockets. One lot struggled for what must have seemed an eternity to its bearer. The relief when it finally docked was unmistakable: to fall before having

properly begun would be disastrous. Few can face what would amount to Lord Subramaniam's almost unheard-of rejection.

Then came oranges. Not the freshly squeezed version, but a precious casting-away-of-evil-spirits variety. Ten, 20 at a time were hung from backs, chest and thighs by bars and hooks, as were small brass pots dribbling rivulets of milk. And finally, those long, three-pronged skewers pushed through tongues and cheeks.

Against this stoical drama, perhaps the oddest reactions were from those making most noise. A few individuals shrieked uncontrollably, twitched like rag dolls or writhed on the ground amid the mess – and they hadn't even been pricked. "It is Lord Subramaniam," observed an elderly man. "He enters the people. They have a trance." He seemed a little doubtful.

All this holiness and hysteria is, thankfully, tempered by a carnival atmosphere. Family and friends come to send off every bird of prayer and they need some light relief. Food stalls are crammed into the tem-

ple compound, and there are impromptu parties and picnics. Cafes and restaurants line the first third of the route. With all those spikes and skewers, policemen direct the flow to avoid spidery gridlocks, and ambulances hover discreetly.

I followed the procession through Little India, down Serangoon Road and on to Tank Road. Devotees strained and often nearly buckled under their loads; some leaned on walking sticks, panting. Egged on by shouts or triumphant resolve, others danced and twirled to music and song.

Hours later, at the end of it all, there is a long queue to enter Chettiar Temple. Standing in the damp heat seemed the cruelest of tests. Whatever milk remains is poured on the deity's feet, and only then will those kavadis be dismantled, bars unhooked and skewers withdrawn. Three days later, the villager who unwittingly began it all is honoured with special prayers. And the birds anticipate a year – perhaps even a life – of happiness and prosperity.

This year the festival of Thaipusam takes place on 10 February.

SWINGING INTO SINGAPORE

Getting there: Quest Worldwide (0181-547 3322) is offering a fare of £402 return on Singapore Airlines which flies direct from Heathrow or Manchester to Singapore. The same agency charges just £372 if you fly on Malaysia Airlines from Heathrow with a stopover in Kuala Lumpur. Singapore Airlines (0181-747 0007) has a special deal. "Singapore Spectacular", at £425 including economy air fare, three nights' accommodation on a twin-sharing basis, breakfast, airport transfer and city tour, until 30 April.

Where to stay: the Singapore

Airlines package deal looks all the more impressive when you see the rates charged by hotels.

The Raffles Hotel (00 65 337 1886) is a must if cost is not a consideration. Room prices start at £296 per night. A cheaper alternative is the Imperial Singapore (00 65 737 1666) where rates start at £80. A definite plus is that it is within walking distance of the Chettiar Temple.

More information: Singapore Tourism Board, 1st floor, Carrington House, 126-130 Regent Street, London W1R 5FE (0171-437 0033).



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INSIDE CITY BREAKS
Madrid/6

OUTDOORS
Off-roading/12

SPORT

THEIR DOWN UNDER
Patrick Rafter interview/16

WORLD CUP TICKETS
The black market/20

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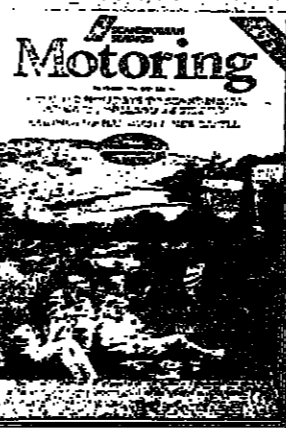
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Monuments to a defeated heresy



Ruined refuge of the Cathars: Château d'Aguilar, near Tuchan

Photograph: Ann Osborne/Robert Harding Picture Library

Set mainly in the Corbières region of France are 20 or so ruined castles, former bastions of the Cathars, perched high on craggy rocks. Here your breath will be taken away by the views, the settings – and the history, writes Emily Passmore.

The Corbières region is one of the poorest in France, so you won't find it crammed with tourist shops and restaurants. But a trip is well worth while if what you want is seclusion, history, and the most romantic of settings.

The Cathars, or Albigensians, were regarded in the 12th and 13th centuries as heretics – and they had the oddest of religions, derived from Zoroastrianism. They believed that the Devil had created earth which was a kind of living hell for wrongdoers. They disregarded the Old Testament, and they refused to bow down before Christ (since, if he were on earth, he could hardly be the son of God). Their priests, known as Prefects, were completely free of sin (rather as the Clears are meant to be in Scientology); they weren't allowed to eat meat or have sex. Sexuality was considered a sin, since all it did was perpetuate the ghastly human race. Indeed, according to one historian, sexuality was seen as a "diabolical trap, a horrible, repugnant snare that closes in

all living reality". (The word "bugger" is derived from the word for Bulgarian, many of whom became Cathars in the Middle Ages.) And there are connections between some of the esoteric symbols of the Cathars, and Nazism.

During the Albigensian Crusade in the 13th century, when the Roman Catholic Church waged war on the heretics in southern France, the Cathars were forced to retreat to these romantic castles; in the end, though, they were completely erased.

From the crumbling walls of Château d'Aguilar to the four châteaux at Latour, the castles remain in various states of ruin. Up in the clouds at the Château Peyrepertuse, a castle built on the very tip of a crag, surrounded by sheer rock face hundreds

of metres up, it is easy to imagine how isolated, hungry and desperate the Cathars must have felt when pursued by their enemies. There remains a curious lavatory sticking out of one end of the castle: any one scared of heights who looked down the hole would think twice about relieving himself.

Peyrepertuse is just one of the best castles and most taxing of climbs: we saw it surrounded in mist like a London pea-souper, and I was so frightened of wandering to the edge and falling off that I remained rooted to the spot until my companion appeared out of the clouds and rescued me. The only trip to beat Peyrepertuse is Latour. Although some areas here are roped off, there are many

unguarded strips where you feel it would be all too easy to fall down into the hands of the waiting Crusaders below. Montségur is demanding, but well worth it, if you're not put off by passing the field where 450 Cathars were put to death at the stake. Four Cathars escaped from Montségur with, it's said, a mass of Christian treasure, and rumours have since abounded that identify this treasure with the Holy Grail.

If, before you go, you can read *Montségur*, written by the French historian Emile Le Roy Ladurie, which was based on Inquisition records of around 1300, you will get a much better idea of what life was like during the period. It's a bit like a medieval soap opera, and tells you who was sleeping with whom, who was guarding whose sheep, what the corrupt parish priest has to say about the yellow crosses the Cathars were forced to wear, and so on.

Montségur itself is one of the prettiest of the castles, the most easily accessible and, surprisingly, the least tourist-ridden. Standing inside its ivy-covered walls, listening to the bells of the cows below mingling with the church bells, and overlooking miles of undulating hills, you feel as though you are right back in the 13th century.

The area attracts its fair share of New Agers, since the castles are all situated around the mysterious Rennes le Château, where in the 19th century, a Father Saunière uncovered a mass of mysterious manuscripts and esoteric material, left, it's said, by the Knights of the Round Table.

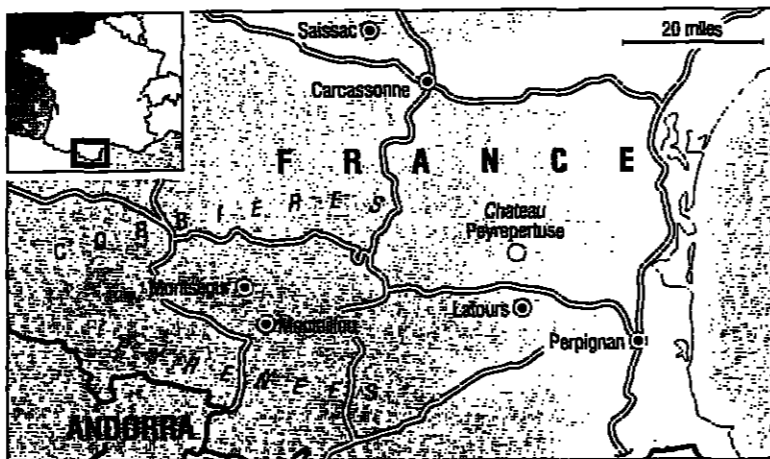
He became suddenly so incredibly rich that he was able to refurbish the church completely (unfortunately he had no taste; it's a terrible painted interior full of naïf statues), build himself a mysterious tower and formal garden, and rebuild the walls around the town. His great wealth was so inexplicable that he was excommunicated for his luxurious lifestyle. Perhaps it was he who discovered the Grail itself...

Carcassonne is a good place from which to start off, a medieval town completely restored by Viollet le Duc in the 19th century, but it's too perfect, and tourists jostle cheek by jowl as they visit shops selling scented candles, Provençal duvet-covers and overpriced pottery.

Instead, I'd advise booking at the Hotel Costes in Montségur – simple and basic, but very clean. It's one of those typical, family-run hotel-restaurants found all over France, with delicious *plats du jour*, roaring fires, two dogs, and local wine. Ideal after a long slog up to a château and back.

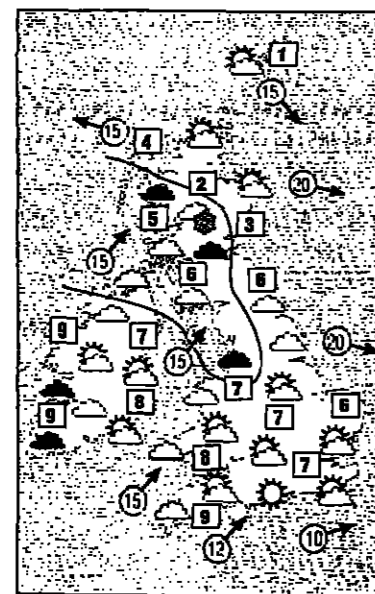
Getting there: Rail Europe (0990 300003) has a service from London Waterloo to Carcassonne via Paris and Bordeaux for £142, taking 11 hours.

Staying there: the Hotel Costes in Montségur is on 00 33 561 01 10 24. A double room costs £207 (about £24) per night. Further information: French Government Tourist Office, 178 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AL (0891 344123, premium rate; fax 0171-493 6594).



WEATHER

The British Isles, noon today



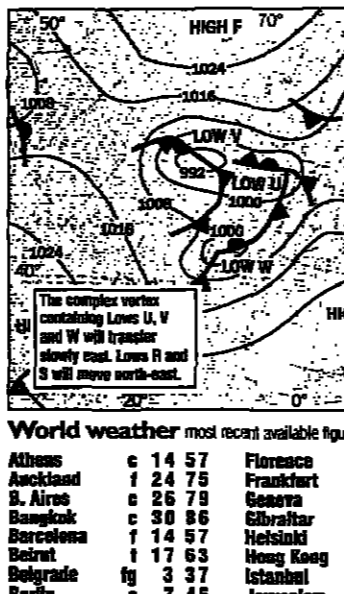
Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

General summary and outlook
Most of England and Wales will have a dry day with some sunny spells after early frost. However, the extreme west will be cloudier and some drizzly rain is likely to affect the north-west for a time. Northern Ireland will be rather cloudy with a little light rain and drizzle. Meanwhile, Scotland will have a cold day with the best of any sunny spells in the north and east. The south and west of the country will have duller spells and some patchy rain, sleet and hill-snow.

Tomorrow will be very unsettled across the whole of the British Isles. In Scotland outbreaks of rain, sleet and snow are likely. Initially the snow will be confined to the hills and the far north, but the rain may turn to snow in southern Scotland later. The rest of the UK will have showers and longer spells of rain. Early next week a northerly airflow will bring cold weather to the whole country with widespread night frost and some snow showers along North Sea coasts.

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

Atlantic chart, noon today



Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

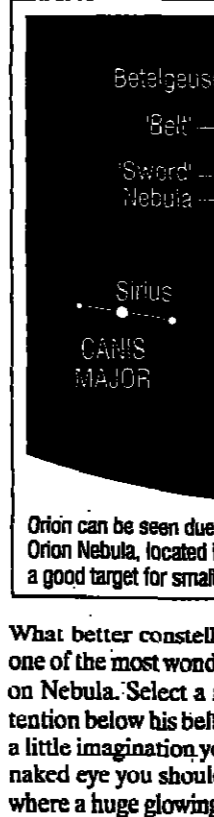
World weather

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

AA Roadwatch

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

The sky at night



Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

Lighting-up times

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

Air quality

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

Outlook for today

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

High tides

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

Sun and moon

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Abertawe	4.39	Cardiff	8.46
Anglesey	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Ayr	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Belfast	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Birmingham	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Blackpool	7.45	Cardiff	8.46
Bournemouth	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Brighton	8.46	Cardiff	8.46
Bristol	8.46	Cardiff	8.46

Orion can be seen due south between 9 and 10 pm this week. The Orion Nebula, located in the 'sword', is just visible to the naked eye and a good target for small telescopes or binoculars.

What better constellation than the magnificent Orion to house one of the most wondrous sights of deep space – the immense Orion Nebula. Select a reasonably dark evening and focus your attention behind his belt and slightly to the left of centre, where with a little imagination you can see his sword dangling. Even with the naked eye you should be able to discern a ghostly greenish haze where a huge glowing gas cloud 1,500 light years away illuminates space like a fluorescent light some 15 light years across. Binoculars will help reveal its fan-like shape. The Orion Nebula is actually a luminous blister on the front of an even greater dark cloud of dust and gas lying behind it, which is a veritable stellar breeding ground. The brilliant hot stars that formed within the Orion Nebula about 1 million years ago are responsible for inflaming this cosmic carbuncle.

GREEN CHANNEL

About 66,000 overseas visitors travelled to South Africa in the first eight months of 1997 – up 22 per cent on the same period the previous year. But as last week's Green Channel explained, only around a quarter of the amount of money from tourism actually stays in developing countries, because of foreign ownership of travel agents, tour operators and hotels – and South Africa is no exception.

When a survey by Capibus for Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) revealed this fact to British interviewees, more than 60 per cent of those interviewed thought the figure was too little. Many were prepared to pay more for their holiday if they could be guaranteed that a greater amount of the money would benefit the country.

Nearly a quarter of respondents said they would be willing to pay an extra 10 per cent, and about three-quarters also felt they would like holiday companies to provide more information on how their trips affect local people.

Sue Wheat

RED CHANNEL

Hazardous marine life in Thailand – warnings from 'Lonely Planet'.

"Sea urchins are found in sandy spots near rocks and coral, often in popular snorkelling areas. They are generally spotted easily – look for dark spheres radiating thin spines. In such environments, take care, when wading or snorkelling, not to be knocked over by waves and tidal surges. Contact with sea urchins may leave their spines embedded in your skin. The larger ones can sometimes be removed with tweezers. Where spines are too fine to be plucked out, the preferred local method is to break them up using a blunt instrument such as a smooth stone or knife handle. Once the spines have been dealt with, the painful venom can be neutralised by immersing the affected area in very hot water for 30-90 minutes.

"Scorpionfish, lionfish and zebrafish all look very colourful and interesting, but their dorsal spines can pack a painful wallop – don't touch! It's very unlikely that you will be stung by one of these bizarre beauties, but if so, use the hot-water treatment described for sea urchins.

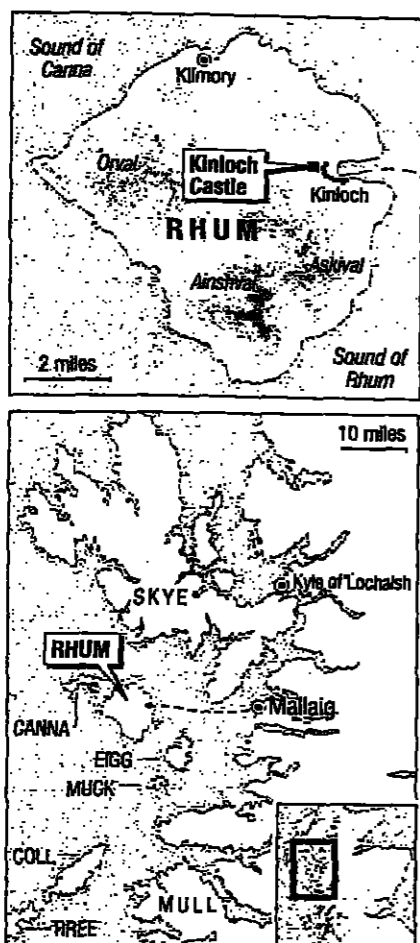
"Cone shells are cone-shaped sea-snails with a venomous proboscis that darts from the narrow end of the shell to ward off aggressors. The pain of their sting can be intense, and venom doses are sometimes fatal. Never touch or even get close to a cone-shaped shell in the sea."

"Thailand's Islands and Beaches" is published this month by Lonely Planet, price £9.99.

Jacqueline Mitton

3/CASTLES

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998
■ 3



Kinloch Castle, on the island of Rhum, may well be Britain's greatest monument to self-indulgence, writes Paul Buttle. And it makes the focus of a spectacular trip.

The extravagance of Kinloch Castle still shocks, 100 years after it was built. Were it on the mainland it would be far better known. But then, the remoteness of its location off the west coast of Scotland makes the place doubly strange.

Seen from the mainland, 15 miles away, Rhum looks a striking island: a cluster of dome-like peaks seemingly afloat in the midst of the sea (an image often seen in the film *Local Hero*). Two hundred years ago the island had a population of around 400. But in the 1820s it was simply "cleared" when the residents were put aboard two ships that took them to Canada.

The island was made into a huge sheep farm, but the venture failed. Thereafter it became merely a playground for the absurdly rich, where they could spend time hunting and fishing.

Few landowners in Scotland at the turn of the century were more absurdly rich than George Bullough, who inherited the island from his father in 1891, and a huge fortune to go with it.

George's wealth had been amassed in the Lancashire cotton industry by his father and grandfather. His grandfather, something of an inventor, had founded a business manufacturing machines to serve the cotton mills; the business later expanded to America. George was one of the wealthiest men in Britain when he came into his inheritance. And whilst his father and grandfather had

devoted their lives to amassing that wealth, George devoted his life to spending it.

Part of that spending involved building Kinloch Castle. Because George wanted a red castle, the stone for it had to be cut and shipped in from the Isle of Arran.

Similarly, because the soil on the island was too poor to produce the type of luxuriant grounds he wanted to have around the castle, that, too, was shipped in: half a million tons of it, from Ayrshire. The castle was completed by 1901 and equipped with all the latest refinements then available, including central heating and electricity – a small hydroelectric plant having been built behind the castle to provide the supply. In the grounds were large greenhouses in which turtles and alligators were kept; humming birds flew in the conservatory.

In today's money it cost George all of £70m to build what was essentially a holiday home, used for just four weeks a year – he had other mansions elsewhere, as well as an ocean-going "yacht" the size of *Britannia*.

The main hall of the castle is a baronial extravaganza: a herd of stags' heads line the walls, the skin of a polar bear covers the floor a few yards from a Steinway grand piano. In the rest of the castle is a ballroom with a musicians' gallery, a dining-room with mahogany panelling, a sumptuous games room with a full-length snooker table, and a small library stocked floor to ceiling with leather-bound books.

All this, to provide a little rest and comfort after a hard day spent on the island's heather-clad hills, blasting away at the red deer. Clearly, tramping those hills did not instill in George any regard or desire for simple living.

The visits went on for 20-odd years after the castle was built, and then they stopped. George and his wife packed up their bags one summer and never returned to the castle. They left everything: the paintings, the furniture, the porcelain, the statues, the books, the cellars stocked with wine. Millions of pounds' worth of valuables they

simply abandoned to gather dust, never sending for any of it. George died in 1939 playing golf in France; his widow, Monica Lilly, died nearly 30 years later, in 1967.

Eleven years before Monica Lilly died, she offered the castle and the island to the Queen, who politely refused it. A year later she sold the island and everything on it, including the castle and all its contents, to Scottish Natural Heritage, for the knock-down price of £1 an acre – a total of £27,000.

Although George and Monica Lilly never stayed in the castle again, they made one final visit to Rhum: and they are still there. On the far south side of the island from the castle is one of the strangest burial sites in Britain: a mausoleum in the shape of a Greek temple, standing in gaunt isolation, looking out over the Atlantic. It was built for George's father, and now George rests on one side of him and his wife on the other.

Close by the mausoleum are the ruined remains of several former island homes – last occupied more than 170 years ago.

Similar ruins can be seen in the north of the island, at Kilmory.

I found Kilmory an entrancing place. Looking north across a sweeping sandy beach, you can see the Cuillin mountains of Skye, and to the south are the majestic peaks of Rhum itself. A herd of stags grazing on the short sward added an almost surreal atmosphere on the day I was there. Normally these animals take flight as soon as they see a human being, but here they have become almost domesticated.

In the midst of the herd was a small cottage. It had a affecting simplicity, especially surrounded by all that natural beauty, and looked a near ideal place to live. I wondered why it was that George Bullough never thought the same, but instead spent all those millions, building what in essence is and always has been, despite all that expenditure, a ludicrously ugly edifice.

The museum section of Kinloch Castle is open from April to October, though tours outside

these dates are sometimes possible. For information on the castle and the rest of the island, contact Rhum National Nature Reserve, the Reserve Office, The White House, Isle of Rhum, Inverness-shire PH43 4RR (01687 462026).

Getting there: short of hiring a helicopter, the only transport to Rhum for most of the year is on a Caledonian MacBrayne ferry from Mallaig (01475 650100). The *MY Lochmor* takes between 90 minutes and four hours, depending on the routing. She operates three or four days a week throughout the year. The fare for a five-day return is £9.35 for foot passengers. In summer, the timetable on Wednesdays and Saturdays allows for day visits to be made; at other times, you have to stay overnight.

Accommodation: the Reserve Office (01687 462026) can arrange places to stay around the island. You can also stay in a self-catering hostel at Kinloch Castle (call the manager on 01687 462037). The attached restaurant is open during the summer.

Rhum legacy of a wealthy egoist

Monumental extravagance: the stone for Kinloch Castle was cut and shipped in from the Isle of Arran, the soil for the grounds was transported from Ayrshire

Photograph: Sue Anderson



SIMON CALDER

The best argument yet for a single European currency has just dropped through my letterbox. You expect your first credit card statement after Christmas to contain a shock or two, but you don't usually expect the culprit to be the credit card company itself.

Here's how it happened. The usual check-out scam surrounded the cashier's desk at the Hotel Alcora in Seville. I said the bill had already been paid; they said it hadn't, and with the disadvantage conferred upon anyone with a plane to catch I handed over my credit card to settle the 25,000-peseta account.

Seconds later the mistake was spotted. My card was put through the machine again, a refund slip was issued for the same amount – in pesetas – and I thought no more about it. Until the bill arrived this week. The amount charged was £106, but the refund was only £100.

Losing £6 in as many seconds is worrying; more alarming is what it suggests about the margins the bank appropriates for foreign transactions.

In the seven years since the collapse of Communism, the countries of the former Soviet Union have adopted all

manner of Western habits, including airlines which focus on the interest of the passengers, not the staff. But they haven't quite grasped the concept that in-flight magazines should be bland and unadventurous.

Uzbekistan Airways' cabin reading, imaginatively entitled *Inflight Magazine*, takes its chances with a feature on Britain's capital.

It commends the "Free topical walking excursions through London", a surprise to the London Walks organisation, which charges £4.50 a stroll.

"An excursion of London will include Big Ben, the clock tower that collates the

exact time throughout Great Britain."

Panorama, the in-flight organ of Ukraine International Airways, focuses on home territory. The first time that British travellers are likely to see this is when heading to the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, probably for work. So any anxiety they may feel will be amplified by the full-page advertisement that begins: "I was getting really nervous. I couldn't believe it when my company transferred me to Ukraine."

The ad, for an American-run clinic in the capital, continues the worrying theme: "As the day

approached, I was starting to panic ... Oh my gosh! What if I get sick over there or worse ... in some kind of horrible accident ... I had heard some nightmare stories about Ukrainian health care."

I think I preferred the blunt technical data that passed as in-flight reading on a flight from Irkutsk to Moscow. Just after the Tupolev took off for its non-stop flight, I read that the aircraft's maximum range was 5,000km.

The distance between the two cities is 5,200km.

What airline is this, anyway? That's the question

posed by Peter Copping of Manchester, who bought a package holiday from a small tour operator. "I travelled out on the ticket of one 'airline', on a plane operated by another carrier. The journey back was on a different, non-UK airline.

None of these was the airline whose name appeared on my ticket. Had an accident occurred – I don't mean a crash, just, say, boiling coffee being spilled on me – I would not have known who was responsible."

Can anyone help?



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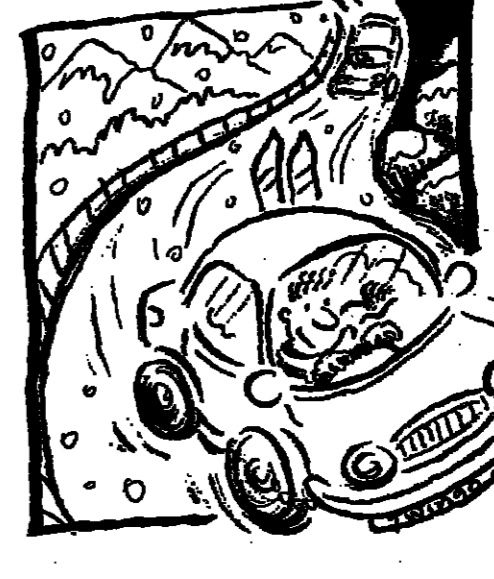
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Contacts: French Railways (0990 300003).
Swiss Railways (0171 734 1921).



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...to the tropical
...tourist track, where
...ry.
...days to
...S.



6/CITY BREAKS



48 hours in the life of Madrid

For a short cut to the soul of the city, Liz Nash offers a guide.

Why go now?

Because the young Madrileños who inject the city with their vibrant energy are back from their New Year skiing breaks and extended family reunions. eager to go out and have fun. And the tourist invasion that immobilises streets, bars and museums won't kick in till Easter: the winter sun spears through your eyelids into your heart, you get 240 pesetas to the pound – and the sales are on.

Beam down

British Airways (0345 222111) and Iberia (0171-830 1711) have been engaged in a low-attrition fares war on the London-Madrid run for several years. Fares are currently around £120. You may be able to find lower prices from Luton on Debonair (0500 146200). From other parts of the UK, the best deals may be with KLM via Amsterdam – through discount agents for around £125.

Get your bearings

The airport bus leaves every 15 minutes and takes 45 minutes to get to the central Plaza Colon. The underground bus terminal connects with the tube, where you can ask for a public transport map.

Check in

Book ahead at the Monaco (522 4630), a former brothel, famed for its opulent bedrooms and easy-going decadence, in the lively gay quarter, Chueca. More mainstream is the Suecia (531 6900), amazingly quiet for such a central spot. The five-star Palace (429 1302), opposite the Parliament, dazzles with belle-époque glory after months of being shrouded in scaffolding. Expensive, at up to £200 a head, but unmissable if only for a drink in the chandelied lounge. The warm-hearted Pension La Coruña (429 2543), a snip at £10 per head, has beautiful views over the Retiro park.

Take a ride

Madrid has few architectural gems and traffic is impossible, so forget the coach tour and take the Teleférico, or cable car, from the Parque del Oeste. Soar over the city and watch trees, the motorway ring road and the feeble Manzanares river fall away beneath you until you arrive in the sprawling Casa de Campo park. Clock the stunning city skyline and after a swift turn about the scrubby Casa de Campo – a wretched, creepy place in my opinion – take a return ride. Off season you're likely to get a cabin to yourself, so if the company is right, have a 10-minute cuddle suspended in that magnificent sky.

Take a hike

... down the Gran Vía, once Europe's sassiest boulevard and still the throbbing artery of the city. Start at the Plaza de España, ringed by pompous Forties sky-

scrapers and redeemed by an engaging monument to Cervantes with a bronze statue of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza at his feet. Stride past glitzy Art Deco movie palaces with their vast, hand-painted film posters; negotiate street vendors, lottery sellers, kids scoffing roast chestnuts; dive into doll shops and bookshops; pass the Telefonica building where journals filed – and were censored – in the Civil War; and proceed to the posh end, dominated by fin-de-siècle buildings, including the newly restored Metropolis (1905), and the Circulo de Bellas Artes. Make for the Cibeles fountain, emblem of the city, invaded by football fans when Real Madrid win. Opposite is the Central Post Office, whose wedding-cake grandeur evokes an era when Spain had an empire to run, by mail.

Lunch on the run

Spaniards like to lunch long and late. But for a brisk midday chop-and-go, try La Toscana (Ventura de la Vega 22) in the heart of bar territory between Plaza Ana and Sol. Get there early (ie before 2pm) and you may be seated without having to queue. Specialities are the tomato, tuna and onion salad, and roast veal and chips swimming in luscious meat juice. Non-meat-eaters enjoy deep-fried squid, or scrambled egg with mushrooms and little eels. With frothy beer on tap, or a jug of house red, it is difficult to pay more than £10 a head.

Cultural afternoon

Don't miss the Prado which, even amid disruptive renovations, still offers the finest collection of Goya, Velazquez and El Greco you are ever likely to see. The newly opened top floor contains a rotunda in semi-darkness with a fine collection of Goya drawings illustrating witchcraft, ignorance and superstition. Being fragile, they are on show for only a few months each year. Across the road is Rafael Moneo's Thyssen Bornemisza museum, jammed with dazzling stuff, particularly 19th-century European and 20th-century American art. Canova's masterpiece *The Three Graces*, on loan from the V&A, is on show in the foyer until 22 February.

Window shopping

Shoes are the thing: cheap, elegant and everywhere. Lurueña, Serrano 54, just by Marks & Spencer, is loaf heaven. For clothes, try any branch of the fashion chain Zara, which knocks off the hottest designs in the blink of an eye at half the price of Britain's high-street equivalents. Vinçon, a cutting-edge Barcelona emporium of every designer object you can imagine, has opened in a matt black, laid-back warehouse in Castello 18.

An aperitif

This is Spain's favourite art form, celebrated with enthusiastic fervour between 12 noon and 2pm and between 7pm and 9pm. Try the raucous and kitsch

Torre del Oro, a gash of Andalusia on the Plaza Mayor, for a chilled fino and coffee-cup-sized *tapa* of paella. Or, if gory bullfight videos are not to your taste, head for Chicote, the city's smartest cocktail bar, at Gran Vía 12. This is an austere haven of steel and leather Art Deco curves, unchanged since the Thirties. Occupy one of the side benches, sip the best *mojito* in town and savour the hush.

Dining late

Madrid may be 300km from the sea but it has the best and freshest fish in Spain, possibly Europe. And the restaurant for unadorned fishy delight is La Trainera (Lagasca 60), run since the Fifties by cheery Miguel Garcia, whose grandfather used to bring fish to the capital in his ice-covered donkey cart. The warren of little rooms with wooden benches and tables gives a casual "ahoy lads" feel to a classy operation.

Sunday morning: go to church

Madrid's churches are mostly heavy, depressing places but an exception is El Basilico de San Miguel, just off the Plaza de Cordon, a sweet, rococo confection built during the rule of the Habsburgs that could have been plucked from a side street of old Vienna. Creamy cherubs and gilded carvings make you smile, and the surrounding cobbled hilly lanes show a gentler side to this roaring city.

Bracing brunch

Squeeze in sideways to Diaz y Larroy, Cava Baja 6, a Basque delicatessen and bar that serves sturdy rioja wine in squat tumblers, and a fierce, sloppy cheese called *torta de casa* with wedges of good, salty bread. Spicy chorizo sausage and smoked salmon canapés will set you up for the day – or at least until siesta-time. By Sunday lunch time bargain-hunters pile in from the nearby Rastro street market.

A walk in the park

The Retiro, once the monarchs' private garden, is a vast, leafy space in the heart of the city. It's a bit nippy just now for a boatride on the lake, or to linger with the fortune tellers, the buskers or the open-air chess enthusiasts, so tramp on and admire the statues, the rose garden and the lovely trees.

Icing on the cake

The coolest souvenir is an oilcloth tablecloth of a post-Franco map of Spain with its 17 autonomous regions clearly delineated. Available from Galean, an orthopaedic and exercise goods supplier on Carretas 31. Don't hang about, though: this is a well-known prostitutes' corner. Before taking the airport bus for your flight home, have a coffee in Gijón, Paseo de Recoletos 21, a traditional marble-and-mahogany coffee-house, where elderly gents still hold forth in their discussions or *tertulias*, as they did a century ago.

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At the feet of the master: beneath the memorial to Miguel de Cervantes in the Plaza de España, is an equestrian statue of his most famous creations – Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Photograph: Pictures Colour Library Ltd

COMPETITION WINNERS

We've been having fun all winter long, checking the answers to our New Year competition. The questions were all related to the Beach Boys, and many of you achieved excellent scores – aided by the festive wild card, which allowed one answer to be "God Only Knows". The tie-break was to nominate the best beach that the Boys never broached. The suggestions girdled the globe: here are the finalists.

Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach: "where Norfolk Broads make fast to their Buoy at night" – Steven Brown, Beckenham, Kent

Leigh-on-Sea, Essex: "Tide's out, mud's up, surfing here won't be especially entertaining" – Ralph Conroy, Leigh-on-Sea

Manchester, Massachusetts: "The 'singing beach' (it does exist, honest),

which the Boys never broached as Brian Wilson couldn't stand competition from Manchester as well as Liverpool" – N D Michaelson, Knebworth, Hertfordshire

Copacabana, Lake Titicaca, Bolivia: "Scarcely a wave or person, cold beer in pale sun by old carousel" – L Hamilton, London

Brighton, East Sussex: "They wanted to catch a wave, not a cold" – Michael Langham, London

All these people receive copies of Lonely Planet's US Phrasebook. The second prize, of a neat pair of eye shades, goes to L Hamilton's lyrical suggestion; and this year's overall champion, winning an inflatable beach bed, is Michael Langham for his suggestion of Brighton.

Thank you all for entering – and watch this space in December for our next geographical quiz.

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مكتبة الامم

Plug in for spring

Convenience gardening sacrifices adventure for instant results, but in midwinter that can be reassuring. Here is a range of young, ready-grown plants to order now for the growing season.

The latest edition of *The Seed Search* tells you where you can buy seed of 40,000 different plants. Just stop and think about that number. Put it in context by remembering that the whole of the native flora of Britain only amounts to about 2,000 plants. Amidst all the doom and gloom about flowers disappearing, forests burning, wild bulbs shrivelling in the hands of rapacious dealers, it is remarkable that any of us, if we wanted, could pick up the phone and order the means of growing such a vast variety of living things.

But we don't. Lists of the 10 best-selling varieties of flower seeds change remarkably little from year to year. Lobelia, dwarf impatiens, godetia, sweet peas, nasturtium, petunia, night-scented stocks, begonia, geranium and pansy were the favourites five years ago. Godetia, stocks, dwarf impatiens, aubrieta, geranium, lobelia, nasturtium 'Jewel Mixed', sweet pea, nasturtium 'Alaska Mixed' and sunflowers are the seed merchant Suttons' current best-sellers. Only the newly fashionable sunflower speaks of any real shift in taste.

It's because we are so predictable as gardeners that seed companies were able to switch smoothly a few years ago into offering us baby plants as a - more expensive - alternative to seed. You could buy a packet of seed of the new creamy-coloured petunia 'Banana Milkshake' from Mr Fothergill for £2.15. Two dozen "plugs" of the same variety cost three times as much, but this is still cheaper than buying 24 full-grown petunias at planting-out time in May.

Plugs represent a slightly more certain vision of the future than a seed packet does. Petunias are not easy to raise from seed if you work, as I do, with a combination of windowsills, airing cupboards and spare bedrooms, rather than with a professional greenhouse and a state-of-the-art propagator. The seed is very fine and germinates best at a temperature of 65-70°F. Because it's so fine, it is best left uncovered on the surface of the compost, but the seedlings then need a little fine compost sifted over them as they begin to grow. All this is fiddly. Then just when you thought you'd got them

over the worst hurdles, the seedlings have a disastrous tendency to damp off - a kind of horticultural hara-kiri.

The petunia is one of the few flowers that has dropped from the best-selling list of seeds in the last five years because people now choose to grow them from plugs or buy them as fully grown plants. There are masses on offer - more than 30 different varieties in Mr Fothergill's Young Plant catalogue alone.

The whole point of such catalogues is to make us lose reason, but after a summer when many petunias melted to a slimy mush in the rain, phrases such as "weather resistant" have a point. 'Fantasy Mixed', an F1 hybrid, has smallish flowers, but there are lots of them and they weather well. Mr Fothergill's sells 24 plugs for £6.45.

I could live without petunias, but I'd hate to be without lobelias, which are also fiddly

to raise from seed, but excellent and easy from plugs. "Hackneyed," said a friend dismissively, when I put them near the top of my own list of favourite annuals. "Non-sense," I replied. It's not their fault they are so often lined out like Morse code, blue dots between dashes of white alyssum.

The plants themselves are enchanting. A little while ago, some self-seeded from a tub in our garden into the cracks of the paving stones below. I liked the effect so much that now I plant them in cracks deliberately. I also plant them between low patches of dianthus, to fill up the ground where the spring-flowering tulips are slowly settling in. The tulips are the most important plants there, and I don't ever want the summer display to crowd the bulbs out. Lobelia understands that. Mr Fothergill's has the bronze-leaved dark blue 'Crystal Palace' (24 plugs for £5.95) and 'Regatta Blue Splash', which I grew last year from seed. It's a trailing type, the white flowers splashed and stained with pale blue.

'White Lady' is a pretty little bushy white-flowered lobelia (£8.95 for 110 miniplants or £7.95 for 40 easiplants, from Suttons). Don't follow their serving suggestion - this white lobelia planted alternately with blue alyssum. Lobelia deserves better. So does alyssum, if we are talking plant rights. Alyssum by nature is a tallish (18-20in), loose-headed beauty. 'Blue Bouquet' (Chiltern Seeds, 95p) gives an idea of what it could do, if only breeders wouldn't turn it into a squash-faced, congested, dumpy little plant, with flowers that ball up in the rain. Alyssum blue is a particularly good colour, slightly slaty, hazy, lovely with a sharp, acid-drop yellow, or with purple. But if you want plugs, dumplings is all you can get: 'Blue Haze', 8in high, from Suttons (£9.25 for 100 seedlings or £7.95 for 40 easiplants) or 'Blue Mist', 6in high, from Dobies (£9.25 for 100 seedlings, or £7.95 for 40 easiplants).

Most firms offer plants in five different sizes, from seedlings to jumbo plugs. The bigger they are of course, the more per plant you pay, but a jumbo plug leaves little room for error on the part of the gardener, as they can be planted out so quickly.

When they arrive (they are usually sent by first-class mail), I plant out all plugs and seedlings, whatever size, in individual 3-in plant pots. This is expensive in compost, but the plants grow vigorously and their roots are disturbed very little when they are planted out. If you set seedlings or miniplugs together in seed trays, the roots tangle with each other and so the plants get a shock when you prise them apart before planting them out. In these dark, gale-blowing days, that's what I'm dreaming of: planting, planting, planting. Roll on spring.

'The Seed Search', compiled and edited by Karen Platt, is available (£10.99 + £1.75 p&p) direct from Karen Platt at 35 Longfield Rd, Crookes, Sheffield S10 1QW. The 'Young Plant Catalogue' is available from Mr Fothergill's, Kenford, Suffolk CB8 7QH (01638 552512). Order all Mr Fothergill's young plants by 20 March. Speed plugs from Thompson & Morgan, Poplar Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP8 3BU (01473 688821) need to be ordered by 15 March. Young plants can be ordered up to 15 April. Last orders for most of Dobies' petunias must be in by 11 March; for alyssum 'Blue Mist' by 4 Feb. Order a catalogue from Broomhill Way, Torquay, Devon TQ2 7QW (01803 616888). Suttons' young plants are listed in their seed catalogue, from Hele Rd, Torquay, Devon TQ2 7QJ (01803 614455). Order alyssum 'Blue Haze' by 5 Feb, lobelia 'White Lady' by 19 Feb. Plugs are available in a range of other annuals, including alyssum, antirrhinum, begonia, brachycome, gazania, helichrysum, geranium, impatiens, marigold and nicotiana.

ANNA PAVORD



Bestseller: petunia surfina 'Pink vein'

Photograph: Friedrich Strauss/GPI

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CUTTINGS

The trouble with Agnes

Next Saturday the Kew guide Eric Taylor will lead a Cooks Tour round the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, highlighting the unusual food plants that flourish in Kew's hothouses. Bananas, coffee beans, tea plants and Caribbean star fruit all grow in the Palm House. Kew could also supply the highly nutritious durian fruit, native to Malaysia and Indonesia - if anybody ever wanted it. Usually they don't, because it smells so terrible. Saturday's tour leaves from the Victoria Gate visitor centre at 11.30am and will be repeated on Wednesday 25 February. For details of other themed tours, contact Kew on 0181 332 5633.

A little while ago I wrote about the 'Agnes' rose in our garden, which had had 15 years to get its act together and had failed miserably. I never saw a single one of its big, double, amber-yellow flowers, and finally dispatched the bush to the bonfire. Lavena Hawes has the same problem. "My courtyard garden in central Cambridge is packed with plants," she writes. "I have about 15 different roses, including the rugosa rose 'Agnes'. She was planted in 1986 in memory of my mother, next to 'Mme Isaac Pereire' and 'Alfred de Dalmas'. They flowered with gay abandon again this summer but 'Agnes' has only ever had one bloom in the whole of her life.

This year she had three buds, but they just turned brown and dropped off. So do I follow your example and give her a quiet burial? I haven't any room to plant her elsewhere." Space in a small garden is too precious to

waste on no-hopers. My answer is an unequivocal "Yes".

Weekend breaks for gardeners are on offer at the The Swan Hotel, Southwold, Suffolk, well within reach of some of the area's finest gardens. During the weekend you can visit Mark Rumary's fine garden at Yoxford, a garden designed by Lanning Roper at Orford, and Lord and Lady Toller's acres at Helmingham Hall. There will also be a champagne welcome at Michael Loftus's excellent nursery, Woottons of Wenham. For full details of this and other gardening breaks in July and September, contact Dudley Clarke at The Swan (01502 722186).

Visiting gardens in France has never been easier, thanks to the Channel Tunnel. Within hours you could be wandering beside the newly planted ponds of the Manoir de Pontgirard, admiring the strictly regulated design of Mme Wirth's garden at Château de Brécé, swooning over the swaths of colour planted by Mme de Carpentier in the walled gardens at Château de Canon and checking out the fruit at the Jardins des Plantes in Rouen. Details of these and other Normandy gardens are available from the Normandy Tourist Board, The Old Bakery, Bath Hill, Keynsham, Bristol BS18 1HG (01179 860386).

Agriframes made its name with metal arches, trellises, pergolas, bowers and fruit cages for gardeners, but its mail-order catalogue wanders much deeper into gardening territory. It offers tool lockers and tip bags,

boots and bamboo screens. Agriframes also sell spun polypropylene fleece, warm, permeable and translucent. Use it to protect the heads of bay trees or tree ferns during winter. Or set it over young seedlings to protect them from attack. A roll of fleece 40ft x 5ft costs £10.25. For a copy of the mail-order catalogue, contact Agriframes at Charlwoods Rd, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 2HG (01342 310000).

Marceline Siddons set up The Conservatory shortly after she had finished her botany degree at Cambridge. She wanted to supply not just conservatory plants, but also the right kind of advice on how best to grow them. So if a plant is a martyr to red spider, she doesn't hide the fact. But if she thinks it is worth growing anyway, she'll tell you that as well. The most recent catalogue produced by Ms Siddons and her husband, Chris, lists nine different kinds of abutilon and five acacias. She also has maundia, which I grew on the south front of the house this summer. Too much leaf to flower was my verdict; however, that might change if the plant were grown in a conservatory, and kept dryer and hungrier. For enthusiasts, there are 13 different kinds of citrus and 15 bougainvilleas.

The Conservatory at Gomshall Gallery, Gomshall, Surrey GU5 9LB (01483 203019) is open Mon-Sat 10am-5.30pm and Sunday afternoons from April to the end of September. Plants can also be sent by mail order.

Anna Pavord

Motorised mud-wrestling

You need high mud tolerance, a willingness to spend all day in second gear, and an ability to obey three rules. Eric Kendall goes four-wheel driving.

Speed is exactly what off-road driving is not about. "If you think you can take your brain out and put the boot in, you should try bumper cars," was the gist of the briefing session, during which I learnt the three rules: 1) always keep your thumbs in a "thumbs up" position while grasping the steering wheel; 2) don't touch the foot pedals unless specifically told to do so; 3) don't stick your arm out to brace yourself if the vehicle rolls.

And you probably thought the ability to drive a car was going to be an advantage. The rules make sense when you start to appreciate what you're in for: gripping thumbs can get broken by the spokes of the spinning steering-wheel as it kicks; indiscriminate use of the accelerator, brake and, most of all, clutch pedal can have unusual effects away from Tarmac; and, finally, the roll cage and harnesses are there to stop you being crushed or falling out - any limb that is sticking out will snap off in a similar but more serious way than the thumbs in rule one.

The only problem is that, like the rules, most of the practice of four-wheel-driving is counter-intuitive to anyone acquainted with driving on the road. Some of the mechanical differences are obvious: power is supplied to four rather than two wheels, and the tyres are big and chunky.

But the hidden differences, such as the long engine stroke and hefty flywheel, mean that it's practically impossible to stall the engine. Once in gear, that's where you leave it. You certainly shouldn't slip the clutch, even as you slow to a halt; with the drum brakes full of water most of the time, the engine serves both for going and for stopping.

It's astonishing, and a mighty relief, the first time you try "first gear, no brakes" down a small cliff. It was only at the end of the day that I realised I hadn't once used the foot-brake going downhill - not even a dab. And these are the inclines that would make Franz Klammer's hair curl.

But you've got to get up there first. Mud, trees, troughs as deep as the vehicle, rocks and pools of water, are all connected on the steep hillside by a track of sorts.

Just powering all four wheels to provide traction isn't the whole story. A mixture of driving techniques is essential: exploiting the weight transfer from front to back, then forward again by punching the accelerator; reading the terrain to ride over obstacles such as slippery rocks and roots before bringing the power back on; using the steering to rock the vehicle from side to side, increasing grip alternately from left to right. It may sound improbable when they describe it to you, but it works.

The driving sensation is direct and physical. Unless you've got power steering, the wheel takes some turning, and when it kicks (thumbs up) as you drop into a big rut, there's no question of stopping it. The ride is as you would expect, only worse - lurching and rolling, with the occasional bang from below as the vehicle "bellies out".

Progress, both across the ground and in driving technique, comes by degrees. The various stages, from Mickey Mouse and the Graveyard Run, to Shooters Alley, the Stump Run and Figure Eight higher up the hill, get ever harder. Each one mixes new tests together in a tighter area, with less breathing space - a confidence-building way to learn. By the time I'd knocked over a small tree half-way through the afternoon, I felt in total control, master of my machine and the environment (a sapling is planted for every tree mown down).

I knew I was ready for the Dragon's Back, the final trail which blends insane drops with tight turns, obstacles and deep water, never allowing a moment's slack. By the third time round without a stutter, I was really enjoying myself, and I'd devised my own off-road driving rules: trust the instructor, trust the machine, and trust your thumbs to do as they're told.

The hardware
"Ergonomics" wasn't in the dictionary when they built the Series One Land Rover; whatever the technical reasons for minimal use of the pedals, they're such hard work that you won't feel inclined to use them at all. On very steep stall-starts - the only time the foot-

brake was used - I got just enough downward force on the pedal by bracing my knee under the steering-wheel for extra leverage.

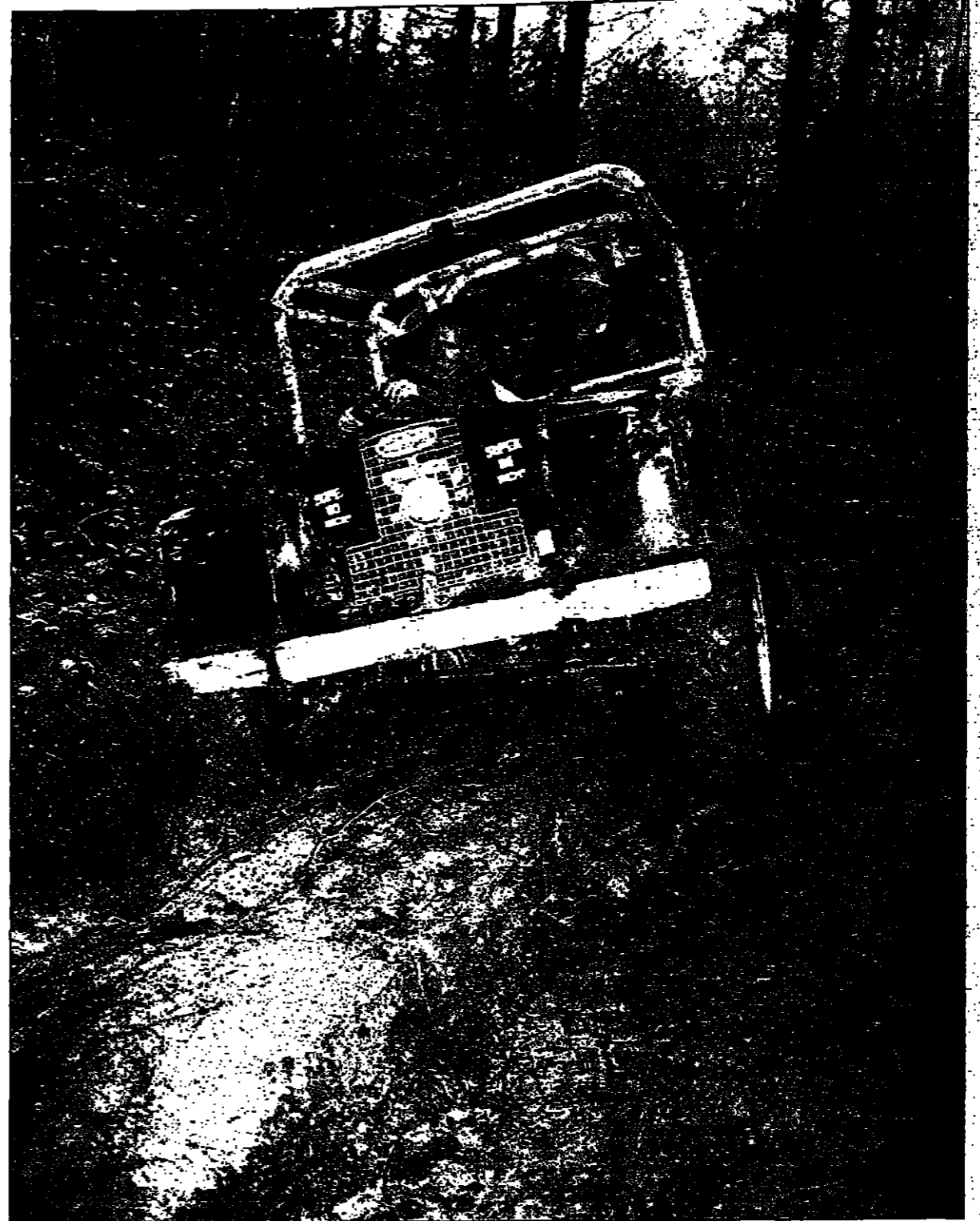
Modern-day four-wheel-drives are a different story, though for serious off-roading, early Land Rover models have a strong following, due in part to the use of bodywork in tight manoeuvres. Based on extreme London parking techniques, this involves using every corner of the vehicle to contact obstacles when necessary, levering round trees, using the side of the vehicle as a pivot.

Learning about how a four-wheel-drive works and confident talk of "diff locks" and "transmission wind-up" is, for many, a less appealing aspect of the subject. In practice, having enough theory to understand how the machine transmits its power to the ground under varying conditions is fundamental - and doesn't require prior knowledge of, or even interest in, motor sport.

Courses

Unless you want to bring your own 4x4, all you need for a day's off-roading are old clothes, waterproof jacket and trousers, boots, and a high mud tolerance. The best machines have no windscreen or windows, so be prepared for the elements. In dry summer conditions, dust and (surprisingly) reduced control are major factors. It's extremely unlikely that driving will ever be cancelled owing to weather conditions: when off-road, adverse equals better. Whatever the time of year, you'll spend all day never getting out of second gear.

One-day introductions to off-roading at the Baskerville Challenge in Herefordshire are available through Acorn Activities (01432 830083) who can provide a complete package including accommodation nearby. They also have off-road locations in Shropshire and Wales. A more serious two-day course for professional four-wheel-drive users such as mountain rescue, police and fire services is also available. (My thanks to Don Clarke, senior instructor at the Baskerville Challenge, and his 1952 Series One 80-inch wheelbase Land Rover.) The Land Rover Experience (0121 700 4619), based on a track at the Solihull Land Rover factory, offers courses at various levels for recreational and specialist professional drivers.



King off the road: the minimalist Land Rover soaks up mud and trees with ease

Photograph: Penny Kendall

GAMES

WILLIAM HARTSTON

THE SUBLIME UNUSEFULNESS OF CHINDOGU

Have you ever wondered how to utilise the energy of crawling babies? Or how to improve a companion's accuracy in scratching your back? Or how to deal with the problem of noodles that are too hot?

If you have ever worried about such things, and particularly if you have worried about them enough to come up with a solution, but above all if that solution is inherently totally impractical, then you could easily have all the qualifications to master the oriental art of Chindogu.

The term - it means "strange tools" - was coined by the Japanese inventor and humourist Kenji Kawakami, whose book *101 Unuseless Inventions* was published in 1993 and followed, two years later, by *99 More Unuseless Japanese Inventions*. The concept of Unusefulness is central to the spirit of Chindogu. To qualify, an invention must be seen as a solution to a real problem, yet must, at some level, be so

deeply flawed that it is as near useless as makes no difference.

Like the cleaning pads that may be attached to a baby's limbs so that it polishes the floor as it learns to crawl; or the back-scratcher's t-shirt, which has a grid marked on the back so that instead of saying up-a-bit, left-a-bit, the scratchee can, on being told the coordinates of the scratcher's fingertip, direct him or her to the precise location of the itch; or the small fan that may be attached to a chopstick in order to cool noodles on their way from plate to mouth.

While Chindogu have been slow to gain great popularity in Japan, they have attained cult status in America and become widely admired in Germany. There are now some 10,000 members of the International Chindogu Society, which may be found on the Internet at this address: <http://www.pit.edu/~cstn3/chindogu.html> where there are also 10 examples of

the art, complete with photographs. "If you join now," the page tells us, "the \$10 membership fee is waived (sic), but you must provide a chindogu idea. (Don't worry about anyone 'stealing' your idea. If it is worth stealing, then it's not chindogu!)" Unad spelling is also evidently not part of Chindogu.

The Society spells out the Ten Tenets of Chindogu, which together define the art:

- 1) A Chindogu cannot be for real use: it is fundamental to the spirit of Chindogu that inventions must, from a practical point of view, be almost completely useless.
- 2) A Chindogu must exist: a concept is not enough; you must have made it. "In order to be useless, it must first be."
- 3) Inherent in every Chindogu is the spirit of anarchy: they represent freedom of thought and action, broken free from the chains of usefulness.
- 4) Chindogu are tools for everyday

life: not specialised or technical inventions.

5) Chindogu are not for sale: even for a joke - if you accept money for one, you surrender your purity.

6) Humour must not be the sole reason for producing a Chindogu: humour is the by-product of a problem-solving activity.

7) Chindogu is not propaganda: they are made to be used, even though they cannot be used. They are not a comment on society.

8) Chindogu are never taboo. No cheap sexual innuendo.

9) Chindogu cannot be patented: they are offerings to the world.

10) Chindogu are without prejudice: for young and old, male and female, of all races and religions.

Ideas for Chindogu will be welcome at: Chindogu, Saturday Games, *The Independent*, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. No prizes, but we'll publish those we like best.

PANDORA MELLY

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Helen Storey, 38, designer
Kate Storey, 36, biologist.

We had two brothers, so there would be times when maybe the boys would play together, or we'd play with the boys. There was a lot of fighting, which is normal when you have four children in a very small flat.

Pillow-fights happened quite often, and we were occasionally given toys which would last for a bit and then break. We were given bows and arrows, so around Easter-time we were all Red Indians.

We also enjoyed scaring each other shyly by playing hide-and-seek. The flat was in a very dark Victorian villa in Belsize Park, so there were plenty of places to hide. You hid in the coat-rack with your feet in the wellington boots and waited until one of your siblings went past on their way to the lavatory. That was quite popular.

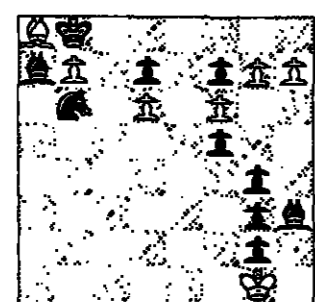
The two of us had a ridiculous game which we used to play when we were about 10 or 11. It was called boarding-schools. We knew some people who went to

boarding school. They slept there and they had another life. We thought that what you did at boarding school was ride horses all day and do anything you liked.

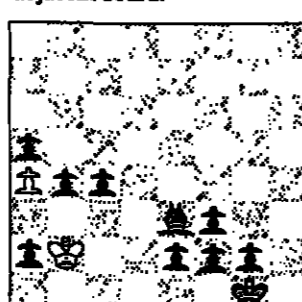
We would pretend we had horses when we went on our obligatory walks on Hampstead Heath every Sunday. We'd center off into the distance, then we'd go into the bushes and have one of those strange conversations about being in a boarding school. Our imaginary boarding school had a lot to do with freedom; a place where we could organise things ourselves and be left to our own devices, but obviously our parents were quite nearby. Occasionally we got into trouble. We'd often run into the kinds of men in bushes who wear raincoats. That shocked us, and eventually put an end to our boarding-school game.

Helen Storey's acclaimed autobiography 'Fighting Fashion' is published by Faber & Faber, price £25 (hardback), £12.99 (softback).

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON



Black playing first, ending with White giving mate. It looked a tough one to crack, but before I had a chance to become engrossed in it, the Colonel set up another position on an adjacent board.



My old friend and colleague Colonel Walter Polhill drew my attention to today's position which, he tells me, he first encountered when he led Polhill's XI on a chess tour of South Africa in the early 50s. "We'd scarcely disembarked from the boat," the Colonel said, "when some chappie came up to us with a chess set and set up the position in the diagram above. Said it was a game from the South African championship. Black to move."

I glanced at the position and expressed some puzzlement. Black just moves his knight anywhere at all and it's mate.

"Ah," Polhill explained, "you don't understand the South Africans. At that time it was forbidden for Black to win. No, it was White who won the game - and in just seven moves."

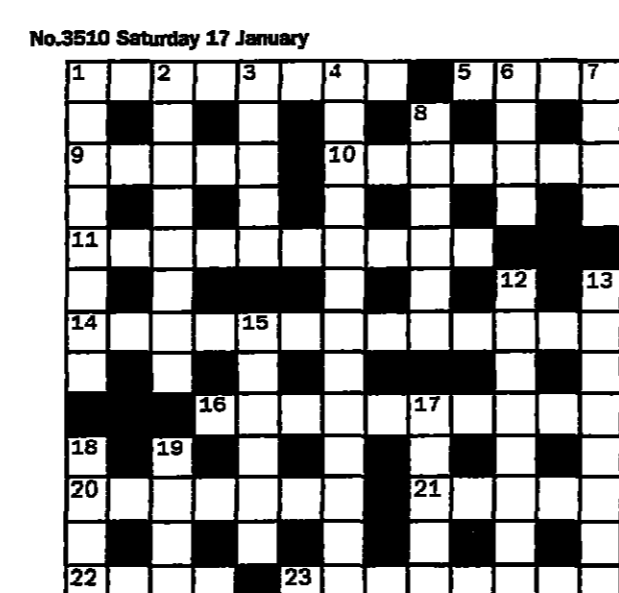
I suggested that Black must have just shuffled around, refusing to give mate, and then resigned, but Polhill said not: "Too patronising, old boy. No, the game must end in mate. Seven moves each,

I asked whether White had won this one, too - thinking that I was making a joke, but the colonel assured me that he had - and again in just seven moves each, with Black moving first. "Damn clever, these South Africans," he said. "Been playing by their own, White-always-wins, rules for so long, that they can always find a way, if there is one. It's an art form sadly lost in the modern world."

But before he could explain how either game had ended, he made his excuses and left. Perhaps you can work out the moves.

Answers: A) 1.f4 h8=N 2.f3 Ng6 3.fg6 g8=B 4.g5 Be6 5.dxe6 d7 6.Kc7 b8=R 7.e5 d8=Q mate. B) 1.a1=Q+ Kc2 2.Qe5 Kb1 3.Qb5 axb5 4.e1=B b6 5.f1=R b7 6.Kf2 b8=Q 7.g1=N Qh2 mate.

CONCISE CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1 Spoke indistinctly (8)
 - 2 Fruits of the may tree (4)
 - 3 Muslim leaders (5)
 - 4 Carrion-eating bird (7)
 - 5 Temperature-controlled switch (10)
 - 6 Disrespectful to superiors (13)
 - 7 Driving force (10)
 - 8 African country (7)
 - 9 Cunning (5)
 - 10 Record (4)
 - 11 Troublemaker (8)
- DOWN**
- 1 Uphold (8)
 - 2 Journey across (8)
 - 3 Surrey racecourse (5)
 - 4 Attempting to overhear conversation (13)
 - 5 Fit of fever (4)
 - 6 Appear (4)
 - 7 Caustic chemical (6)
 - 8 Advocate of non-violence (8)
 - 9 Santa's draught animals (8)
 - 10 Tedious (6)
 - 11 Of pale colour (5)
 - 12 Aid (4)
 - 13 Snare (4)
- Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:**
ACROSS: 1 Force, 4 Tar (Four-star), 7 Iris, 8 Tentacle, 9 Congratulate, 10 Closer, 13 Locker, 15 Swimming bath, 19 Lipstick, 20 Acid, 21 Gin, 22 Dwell. DOWN: 1 Forgo, 2 Resigns, 3 Extra, 4 Tars, 5 Relieve, 6 Annual, 11 Lasting, 12 Remain, 14 Cabbage, 16 Ibsen, 17 Naked, 18 Trial.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

North-South game; dealer South

North	South
♠ 3	♠ A J 10 9 5 4
♥ Q 9 8 6 4	♥ 3 2
♦ K 7 6 5	♦ Q J 10 9
♣ Q 10 7	♣ 5

West

West	South
♠ 8 7 6	♠ 3
♥ 5	♥ 6 4 3
♦ 3	♦ A 9 8 5 3
♣ K J 9 8 6 4 3 2	♣ A Q 7 4

When you hold a hand such as South's on this deal, you may have a problem with your opening bid, but what you do not expect is the full orchestra striking up.

South opened One Heart. West pre-empted with Four Clubs and, under pressure, North decided to compete with Four Hearts. Not one to be excluded from the act, East was there with Four Spades and South jumped to Six Hearts. West considered a sacrifice in spades (which would have cost 1,100 points) but decided to pass.

West led ♠ 8 against Six Hearts and, after taking his ace, East returned his singleton club. Now South was able to claim, explaining that he was drawing trumps and throwing two diamonds from dummy on ♠ K.Q.

This cost East-West 1,430 points and East was mildly irritated that his partner had not saved. West, however, remained unapologetic, for he had studied the full hand. We can defeat Six Hearts," he claimed.

"Rubbish," replied his partner politely.

Well, who was right?

It was the inoffensive West whose analysis was more accurate. Suppose that East had withheld his SA at trick one. It would have been a play that could easily have been wrong but, as the cards lie, although South does not lose a spade trick, he cannot escape two diamond losers.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY

Despite its importance, there have been very few books devoted purely to the topic of doubling. Two books were published in 1982. If you ever come across a copy of *Dynamic Cube Strategies* by Gaby Horowitz and Bruce Roman my advice would be to tread warily, much of its content having been shown to be flawed. The second book was in an altogether different class and is still excellent reading if you can find a copy. It is *The Doubling Cube in Backgammon - Vol. 1* by Jeff Ward. Intended originally as the first in a multi-volume set, it sets out very clearly the basics of doubling and redoubling, including the maths for those who want to delve that deep, and examines racing doubles in great depth. Ward's refinement of the Thorpe Count, known not unsurprisingly as the Ward Count is well worth knowing. It is a great shame he never found time to write the subsequent volumes.

A new book *Backgammon: Winning with the Doubling Cube* by Peter Bell has just been published by the Gammon Press. While more verbose than Ward's tome and despite some of the prose being somewhat transatlantic, it summarises in 200 pages the basics of doubling. It looks at doubling cube fundamentals, when and when not to double, how to evaluate winning chances, when to take, the psychology of doubling, and it provides a number of benchmark positions for typical game types. It also looks at how to change your play of the men depending upon who owns the cube, and includes some amusing anecdotes to illustrate points made in the text.

Bell also looks at the difficult problem of evaluating blitzes, backgames and prime v prime positions by the use of formulae. These formulae are as yet unproved, but in the complex world of doubling something is better than nothing and they are certainly a step forward. At times, the book goes a little fast for my liking but if you are going to cover the doubling cube in a short book then there will have to be some elements that can only be touched on lightly. At \$30 plus \$12 postage and packing this is not cheap, but if you are serious about improving and want to gain a better understanding of doubling cube theory then the investment is worthwhile. Like all backgammon books it will take several readings to get the best out of it and then will come the most difficult part: putting into practice what you have learnt. Gammon Press, PO Box 294, Arlington MA 02174, USA. Tel: 001-617-641-2091.

13/OUTDOORS

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998
13

What did you think of chapter 3?

You may have read a book – but you haven't experienced it to the full until you've discussed it with another reader. Or so say members of the increasingly popular readers' groups.
Mike Higgins reports.

"A masterpiece that moves faster than the speed of thought," the *New York Times* said of *Neuromancer*. The *Observer* described its author, William Gibson, as "the Raymond Chandler of SF". But "Cyber-wank," reckons Sarah Rogers, of the Earls Court Waterstone's Book Discussion Group.

Few other members of the group are as forthright as the 51-year-old textile conservator, but the American writer's novel is nevertheless getting an old-fashioned panning. Even Martin, a sci-fi fan, is left cold after a dip in Gibson's hyper-noir.

The group is nothing if not thorough. Back in November, science fiction had been agreed upon as the genre for January's meeting, and the book club organiser, Jack Noe, assistant manager at Waterstone's, drew up a short list of half-a-dozen novels. December's meeting came, and the group voted that *Neuromancer* would be read in preparation for tonight's discussion.

With such diligence behind them, and two hours in Waterstone's ahead, the group seems to feel it would be churlish, not to mention wasting a journey, to dismiss a seminal piece of contemporary literature out of hand.

So David, a sixtiesomething economist, reflects graciously on the glossary of techno terms Gibson has coined, and Alasdair, a 31-year-old advertising account manager, admits that *Neuromancer*'s descriptive passages have their visionary moments. Ironically, it's Jack Noe who has got the least time for Gibson.

The home of the reading, or book discussion group is America. It is estimated that well over a million groups thrive in bookshops, libraries and homes across the States, offering the avid reader not just general literature but specialist material in groups that may concentrate solely, for example, on politics or mystery fiction.

Reading groups, formally at least, have yet to take a big hold in the UK. Concerted efforts to promote them seem to centre on the north, where Bradford Libraries lead the way. As well as offering a varied programme of reading groups, they also publish a guide to finding "a good read", *Opening the Book*. Yet in London, when we asked various libraries, publishers and arts institutions about readers' groups they expressed regret that they had little information, concluding that "something ought to be done".

The 12 members of the Earls Court Waterstone's group all looked as though they couldn't wait to get to the meeting and let rip. "The frustration of reading a really good book is being unable to talk to others about it because they haven't read it," says Alasdair.

If anything unites the group, it's this thirst for "a good read" – a desire Jack underestimated when he first established the group in the summer of 1996. "Attendance was really erratic the first year," he remembers. "The mailing list was really local, and we ended up having 15 people one month and three the next. So we read it in *Time Out* and got a big response. It's better now, because we've got people from all over London."

Waterstone's, by way of response, charges no membership fee, laying on nibbles and a few bottles of wine as well.

Surely, though, a discussion in a large working bookshop is a poor second to a private readers' group in the comfort of someone's home? Not according to Alasdair, who tried and failed to set up a private readers' group himself, or indeed Geraldine Kelley: "I have friends in private book clubs who said that they'd prefer to come to this," she laughs. "Home meetings tend to be a group of friends gossiping and worrying about what food they're going to prepare – they get off the real point of the meeting."

Not that there aren't digressions tonight. Gibson's jargon-littered narrative has induced group future-shock, and everyone soon tires of attempting to unravel the labyrinthine plot. Instead, the discussion ambles into related areas: definitions of cyberspace; where Gibson stands in relation to Huxley and Orwell; sci-fi's doubtful universal appeal. The exchanges are amiable, free of any self-consciousness and, from a group apparently dumbfounded by their chosen text, sustained without much recourse to Jack Noe for direction.

For Alasdair, though, consensus is not the point of the evening. "When everybody either hates or loves a book, then the discussion is a bit limited – Checkov everybody loved, and tonight's book everybody hated. It's good if there's an antagonist in the group."

The healthy appetite for differences in opinion is reflected in what Jack Noe sees as the typical motivations of those attending readers' groups: to read more, and also more widely. "Usually you read what you're interested in, and you don't go outside that particular area," says Nick, a 29-year-old pianist. "But each month we have a different subject. For instance, it's Indian writing next month, something I've never read in my life. It also focuses you – you have to read the book in four weeks."

The group buys each month's selection from Jack at a 10 per cent discount – next up is *Heat and Dust* by Ruth Praver Jhabvala – and he insists that the club is not really about shifting books: "It's about customer relations, because they get to know and hopefully trust my recommendations. It gives the shop a personal element."

Meanwhile, Fiona Woods, a 26-year-old IT assistant, typifies the enthusiasm of the group: "When you read a really good book, you almost want to broadcast the fact. Sometimes talking about it is even more enjoyable than reading it."

Waterstone's, 266 Earls Court Road, London SW5 (0171-370 1616). Robert Walters at Bradford Libraries (01274 753 666)



Brief encounter with shifting sands



Continuing his series on great short railway journeys, Matthew Bruce enjoys a nostalgic trip around Morecambe Bay on a scenic line to the Lakeland.

If Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard could see Carnforth station today they would weep even more than they did when filming the famous steam scene there in *Brief Encounter* in 1945. The limestone walls are moss-covered and crumbling. The paint in the abandoned booking office has peeled away – in some places so badly as to reveal the original bricks under years of plaster. The only light relief is offered by the graffiti, which are touchingly innocent in their lack of swear words. "Kerry D is fit," by Phillie," reads one, written perhaps after a modern-day brief encounter between two teenagers.

The two-sided station clock looks as if it might have survived since the film was released. It hangs precariously from wires, like an over-sized wristwatch with a threadbare strap that could snap at any moment. One side told me it was 3.20, the other a minute past two. Neither was right.

From the platform you can see Steamtown, a museum that houses a fine collection of steam locomotives. It looked as though it would have been worth a visit, had I been able to find the way in.

I think I found the spot where Johnson and Howard left the station café and walked across the platform enveloped in locomotive steam. But all remnants of a café are long gone: the windows and doors have been boarded up and broken into and boarded up again, and only the leaking gutters and metal skeletons of signs creaking in the wind break the silence. It was spooky, and I was glad of some company, even if it was a gang of excitable schoolboys with ties at half-mast.

The one excellent reason for coming to this forlorn little station in north Lancashire is that

the Barrow-in-Furness trains come through here on the branch line from Preston, heading for the Lakes. The 16-mile stretch from Carnforth to the gentrified holiday resort of Grange-over-Sands follows the stunning coastline as it curves round the head of Morecambe Bay. When the track was first laid in 1867, wealthy businessmen from Lancashire and Yorkshire built elegant homes in Grange and commuted to Preston or Lancaster along this picturesque route.

Carnforth sits almost on the Irish Sea coast, and as my train pulled out north across Warton Sands I found it hard to distinguish between land and sea. Mudflats that looked like the boggy limits of a nature reserve at low tide would be covered with water in a few hours. Our two-carriage train skimmed the tops of the reed beds. After the hamlet of Crag Foot we passed between small, wooded knolls and mist-wrapped villages that might have graced any of CS Lewis's Narnia stories. Even the names sounded right – Silverdale,

Waterslack, Arnside, Middlebarrow Wood.

In the cold winter light the bay looked like a sheet of steel. We crossed the estuary of the river Kent on a viaduct. I watched Holme Island, farther west along the coast towards Grange, rise up out of the sea haze like Atlantis. Just beyond the track sleepers, rivulets in the mud snaked away towards the sea. Grange station is a little way past Holme Island and a set of rocks called Seldom Seen – which need renaming, because they have been uncovered for the last 30 years. The town fits invitingly into a cleft below the cliffs. Looking out to sea at low tide from the platform, the shoreline seems miles away and the sand looks solid enough, but these flats are treacherous.

Before the coming of the railway, the only way to get from Morecambe to Grange was over the sands (hence the name). I learnt from an excellent guidebook, written and produced by the children of Grange Church of England primary school, that whereas some travellers waited for a boat at high

tide, others braved it in a horse and carriage. A coachman would stand up high on the back of the carriage as a look-out, scouring the ground ahead for hidden channels and patches of deadly quicksand that lurked under the surface. It may sound dangerous, but the alternative was to risk being robbed by highwaymen along the road to the north. Today there is a footpath marked on the Ordnance Survey map right across the sands. It gives a red warning to anyone thinking of going for a stroll: "Public rights of way across Morecambe Bay can be dangerous. Seek local guidance." Seeking urgent psychiatric help might be more appropriate. The mud has claimed lives in the past.

A more leisurely way of enjoying Grange is to spend a while examining the station. It is a gem. A £500,000 refurbishment has returned the Grade II listed buildings to their former glory, and the Railway Heritage Trust recently honoured it as one of the top three stations in the country. It has survived two world wars, nationalisation and privatisation, almost unscathed. The town clerk, Frank Brooks, is proud of these achievements. "We fought a long battle to get it looking like this," he told me, as he rushed around the town hall placing name-plates for a council meeting. "Railtrack wanted to make it single-line but we said no, this is a tourist destination and you can't do that, and we won."

This is not the end of the line. You can take trains on from here to Ulverston and Barrow-in-Furness, but for thousands of tourists each year, Grange and its surrounding countryside is magic enough.

On the footplate
When to go: open all year round (check with tourist office for sand walks)

How much: Preston to Grange-over-Sands via Carnforth day return, £6.80 adults, £3.40 for children aged five to 15.

Information: North Western trains on 0345 484950 or 0161 228 5906 (cycle information), or 0161 228 5907 (facilities for the disabled), and Grange Tourist office on 015395 34026.



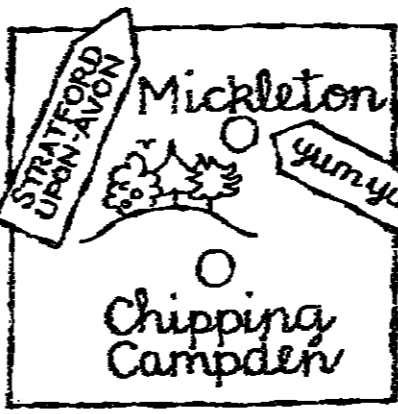
At the head of Morecambe Bay: view over the River Kent (top); Arnside station (above)
Photographs: Tom Pilon

What, when, where ...

Feeling peckish after Christmas? Go wild at the Great British Pudding Festival, held at the Three Ways House Hotel in Mickleton. Those who take their puddings really seriously can stay in the Spotted Dick and Custard bedroom (booking essential) and feast themselves at the Pudding Parade of seven puddings, including one mysteriously known as "Lord Randall".

And if you're still ambulant the following day, you can join in a Cotswold ramble to work up an appetite for the next pudding event.

The Great British Pudding Festival is held between 16 and 30 January at the Three Ways House Hotel, Mickleton, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire (01386 438429).
Sally Kindberg



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Driven to distraction by the sideshows and slideshows that beat the real thing

MIKE
ROWBOTTOMON THE
ALTERNATIVE
ATTRACTIONS

Apparently I've seen Stirling Moss. At Brands Hatch, so my parents always maintained. And when I think hard about it, I do faintly recall a sporting echo from that far-off Sixties Saturday.

Two towers of white paper cups were constructed somewhere behind the backs of the spectating adults, and if my memory serves me well my tower grew bigger than that of my cousin David's before it crashed to the ground.

I believe there was some discussion among the adults about a more public crash that occurred on the other side of the fence, but that was none of our concern. We were not interested in the main attraction.

Alternative attractions are everywhere in the sporting realm - they need only to be not quite looked for. And an aside

is always more interesting than the speech it punctuates.

I was once involved, along with a roomful of other journalists, in a live satellite link-up to interview Nigel Mansell, who was on the other side of the Atlantic preparing to challenge for the Indianapolis 500 title.

We linked before he realised, and our wide screen suddenly transmitted his image as he chatted with his team aides about getting the sponsors' names into every interview he was about to undertake. "Got to keep them happy," he said. Most entertaining.

The light snow of publicity which has already fallen on us concerning next month's Winter Olympics in Nagano reminds me of a moment of quiet bliss I enjoyed at the last Games-on-ice.

Once skaters finish scribbling on a rink, and the noise of clapping dies away, there is an interlude which features the quiet but insistent attraction of a tractor-like vehicle which resurfaces the ice.

How to describe the sporadic compulsion of this activity?

When you next turn off the ignition in your car, instead of bundling out towards whatever pressing business awaits you outside its suddenly quiet interior, stop. Just say: Can't be bothered. Sit back. Do nothing. Forget your busy life...

That is how it feels watching the slow, orderly progress of the Zambada, or the Zemboda, or whatever silly name the machinery bears, as it sweeps rhythmically over the distressed ice, smoothing and restoring, smoothing and

restoring... until the fixed-smile scribbling starts up again.

One of the great blessings of actually attending a football match rather than watching it on television is that you don't have to follow the progress of the ball.

That, as we all know, can be a tiresome business. Really being somewhere grants access to more interesting sideways viewing: policemen seeking out offenders who have disappeared into the rolling maul of their fellow troublemakers. Idiots climbing on the stand roofs to get a better view. More safety-conscious spectators set up in overlooking tower blocks, their windows crumpled of neighbours.

Unemployed goalkeepers scuffling about in their areas like bored schoolboys. Stewards in dayglo waistcoats tumbling

over the backs of intent photographers. Spectators sloping out of the director's box ridiculously far ahead of the half-time whistle.

At times, of course, football crowds will turn themselves into an alternative attraction in the form of the Mexican Wave - and woe betide the section of spectators who fail to carry the impulse around the ground.

When you witness the fascist jollity of the Mexican Wave, it gives you a clear message about the quality of the main attraction. It is like when children exclaim about what a delicious, lovely, beautiful yummy meal you have served up rather than taking their knives and forks and tucking in.

The thought of food reminds me of an occasion when I witnessed the ultimate triumph of the alternative at-

traction. The sylvan setting for this revolutionary act was the Hurlingham Club in London SW6.

The first ATP Seniors tournament to be held in Britain had gathered a cluster of beloved names from tennis's recent history. The Nastase, Rod Laver, Roger Taylor, Peter McNamara, uncle Tom Okker and all were on hand to entertain a hand-picked crowd of 600 corporate guests.

But the golden oldies were obliged to kick their heels and fiddle with their racket strings as a traditionally subordinate activity took on an inordinate importance.

Laver and Co were kept waiting nearly an hour while a menu comprising *Soupe de Tomates à la Provençale, Saumon à l'Aneth au Beurre Blanc, Truffes au Chocolat, Café and*

Truffalines et Muscadines was consumed by the chosen not-so-few. Then again, the menu had been prepared by Albert Roux.

But perhaps my favourite recollection of an alternative attraction concerns the colleague whose concentration at the LA Olympic Games of 1984 was completely wrecked when the binoculars with which he was attempting to watch the 1500 metres semi-final randomly alighted on a young woman of such heartbreaking beauty that he could not rest until he had made some form of contact with her.

A mission was directed towards the unsuspecting spectator. A liaison was arranged. Two lives were changed. A case of the alternative attraction being the main attraction all along.

Rafter coping with weight of Australian expectation

The Australian Open gets underway on Monday, and the hosts have a current Grand Slam singles champion to support for the first time since Pat Cash in 1988, when the tournament was transferred from the grass of Kooyong to the rubberised concrete courts of the National Tennis Centre in Melbourne. How will Pat Rafter cope with all the fuss?

While close to comparison with the "classy Aussies" of yesteryear admired by Pete Sampras, Pat Rafter is emphatically a character in his own right. That was underlined by the 26-year-old Queenslander's response to the acclaim which followed his triumph last September in succeeding Sampras as the United States Open champion.

"People are thinking that I'm some sort of genius now," Rafter said, "but it's not as if I'm this completely new player - I'm the same old sack of crap I always was."

In which case, full marks for the packaging. Only Sampras, the defending champion, world champion and No 1 in the year-end world rankings for the past five years, is seeded higher than Rafter for the Australian Open men's singles title. Since returning home for the first time in seven months after the ATP Tour Championship in Hannover in November, Rafter has sampled the interest his victory in New York created Down Under by participating in the Hopman Cup in Perth and in this week's Sydney International ATP Tour event. He was defeated in the semi-finals yesterday by Oxford's Tim Henman, 7-6, 7-5. Monday brings the big one at Melbourne Park, the first Grand Slam tournament of the year.

"Mate, listen. I don't know what to really expect," Rafter said. "I am figuring that it's going to be pretty crazy. Even when I've been 60 or 80 in the

world it's been pretty crazy, pretty difficult to work out. I guess this time it's going to be a little bit more. I'm really looking forward to it. It's going to be a lot of fun. If I could just have a relaxed attitude instead of getting uptight about the whole situation, I think that's most important."

Relaxation is not a problem for Rafter at his second home in Pembroke, Bermuda, where he gets about on a rented moped. Having experienced two years of frustration nursing tennis injuries, one of which caused him to retire during the second round of the 1996 Australian Open - "a blessing in disguise, because I realised by watching everybody else having success how much I wanted it as well" - he is determined to make the most of life.

"It has to be that way, mate, for me to continue to be out here," he said. "Listen, I'm not going to let this success keep me at home all the time so that I can't go out. I don't want to deal with people all the time but I'm going to have to do it. For me to stay normal, I'm going to have to do that. I'm going to

continue to do what I love doing, that's enjoy myself off the court as well as on the court."

Is he able to block out all the attention?

"Well, I can't really block it out. I've just got to learn to deal with it. You have to deal with it. It's part of it, and when it gets too much I have to learn to say 'No, in a nice way. I don't like to offend anyone.'"

A year ago, Rafter and Britain's Greg Rusedski both lost in the first round of the Australian Open. They went on to meet in the final of the US Open. Rafter is currently ranked No 2 in the world. Rusedski No 6. "I think Greg's going to be up there for another couple of years," Rafter said. "First of all, he's got a great serve, everybody knows it. He's a great competitor. He's starting to move very well. You'll see him there for a while."

Rafter also has the highest regard for Henman, the British No 2 currently ranked 19th in the world. "Timmy is potentially a top five player," the Australian said. "He's probably got



Patrick Rafter smiles on his way to victory over Todd Martin in Sydney this week. Photograph: Warren Clarke/Reuters

to get a little stronger. When I've played him, he's got every shot. Behind Sampras, he's probably the next most talented player on the Tour, I think.

"He's got everything, except that bit of strength. That's the only thing I picked up on him, and I think he will work on that. He works hard. He's a great guy, great attitude. He's one of the boys in the locker room, messing around. He knows how to enjoy tennis, and I think that's important. That's his personality, a good guy to hang around."

Unlike Henman and Rusedski and the majority of leading players, Rafter does not travel with a full-time coach, preferring instead to consult Australia's Davis Cup mentors,

John Newcombe and Tony Roche, when he feels the need.

"I think the reason it really does suit me so well is because when I'm practising, first of all, I've got to learn that if I'm on the court, I'm playing the match, and I've got to learn to figure out the match myself. There are times when I feel I might form bad habits, but I'm pretty well aware of that at the moment. I'm pretty aware of my game. My game's pretty well moulded."

John McEnroe in his prime travelled without a coach, making telephone calls to Tony Palafox in New York if he needed advice and visiting him at his tennis club if his game needed fine-tuning. "Well, I think Roche and Newcombe are re-

ally good like that," Rafter said. "Sometimes if I feel like something's not going well, I ring them up and talk about it." They are expected to be in close proximity on home territory.

On the last occasion Rafter raised expectations at the Australian Open, in 1995, he advanced to play Andre Agassi in the fourth round. Agassi, the eventual champion, cuffed him, 6-3, 6-4, 6-0.

"I did learn a lot from that," Rafter said. "At the same time, I think Andre was at the top of his game then, and I wasn't playing the best tennis. I struggled through a couple of five-set matches [against Jakob Hlasek and Marcos Ondruska] to get through to the fourth round. I

was pretty lucky to get through there. I guess I wasn't really prepared for that match. I wasn't ready. I wasn't in the same league as Andre, and he showed that. That's what knocked me back down a couple of pegs."

Rafter's renewed confidence and the athleticism of his all-court game has enabled him to delight spectators on every continent. What pleases him most about his game is his improved mobility.

"I've just been able to move and get to nearly every ball," he said. "That's frustrating people. I think, so they're going for more and more, and eventually they're missing. And when I get the right ball, I'm at the net." And before long the umpire is announcing game, set and match.

High rollers sweep in and pollute the memory of Eddie

Big Sunday, with its festival of big waves, is meeting the big money. The mixture does not seem to work.

I was supposed to be going to church. But I succumbed to the ancient pagan rituals on the beach. It was Big Sunday at Waimea Bay. The much trumpeted 25-foot swell finally pulled in to North Shore Grand Central.

Unfortunately, it timed its arrival for midnight. By dawn, it was down to a marginal 20. The "Quiksilver in Memory of Eddie Aikau" big-wave contest, honouring the legendary surfer and heroic Waimea lifeguard, and which stipulates day-long 20-foot-plus conditions, was put back on hold.

This didn't stop about 40 guys paddling out and a huge crowd of spectators watching them at this Coliseum of surfing, as massive breakers rolled in, reared up, and toppled over in a fury of white water.

The air was heady with the optimistic scent of wax, but the beach was littered with broken boards. Two jetskis were fully employed ferrying back in a lot of dreamers. Maybe half of the pack were just there to be able to say, "Yeah, I was there."

Although Waimea retains its mythic status as the holy of holies among North Shore breaks, the Bay was being outgunned by the outer reefs, the cloud-breaks like Phantoms and Revelations, where solid beyond-Eddie-sized waves were breaking all through the afternoon. The Willis Brothers, Michael and Milton, board shapers to the elite big-wave aficionados, were towing-in far from the madding Waimea crowd, beyond Backyards, and getting more barrels than a beer truck.

It was too good to last. Before noon, the big money turned up, in the shape of Team Quiksilver. Suddenly, from being Walden Pond with waves, it was more like a Hollywood film set. Two helicopters, a couple of Zodiac boats, nine state-of-the-art waverunners, and about a dozen cameras, not to mention eight or nine of the best surfers in the world, had dropped in to commune with nature.

A lot of the Eddie invitees were there, having flown in from other islands, California and Australia to be here for the big day. But the fact is that the Willis Brothers, North Shore veterans who haven't been given a shot by Quiksilver, were more than matching them, wave for wave. One of the Quiksilver

crew, being paid a bundle just to be there, took off on a particularly heavy wave, but pumped for the shoulder, while Milton Willis aimed straight for the most dangerous core of the wave and made it out again.

There was one big name who didn't even come close and didn't go back out after lunch. Local knowledge and experience were pre-eminent. But when the pictures and the video come out, I guarantee it won't look that way: global media expertise will win out.

That episode dramatised what has become the problem with the Quiksilver contest: its selection procedure. This is the only contest of its kind in the world, and merely to be in it, let alone win it, is a massive status symbol. And yet the criteria by which the invitations are handed out remain clouded in secrecy. Just as at Waimea on Sunday, of the 24 full-on contestants and their 24 alternates, maybe only 50 per cent would be beyond dispute. As for the other 50 per cent, it is possible to imagine other names, with a greater claim.

The truth that almost no one in Hawaii dares to speak is that the winners of the only two previous completed contests over the last few years are likewise compromised. The first winner - Clyde Aikau - is the brother of Eddie. The second, Keone Downing, is the son of

George, the director of the whole event. While both these surfers may indeed have surfed the most radical waves on the day, the fact that they took part left alone went on to win has aroused suspicion. To put the case at its least sensational, selecting and judging are insufficiently transparent: justice is not being seen to be done.

"The whole thing is a sham," is Milton Willis' more dramatic way of putting it. "The concept is fantastic. I don't question the idealism or the memory of Eddie. But let's take the sheepskin off the wolf here - people are being duped."

Quiksilver sports wear stand to make an immense amount of money out of this event, even though it happens so rarely. The North Shore is quick to criticise what they see as minimum investment, maximum hype.

Tellingly, two of Quiksilver's living legends are flying out to Australia, despite promising lows stacking up all the way to Alaska. One of the sceptics spoke for a large constituency when he said that "Word is they don't want to have any part of the monster swell that's coming."

Big business and big waves don't mix.

Henman manages to hold off Australia's new hero

Tim Henman yesterday recorded one of the best wins of his career in beating the world No 2, Pat Rafter of Australia, in straight sets to reach the Sydney International final for the second successive year.

Henman won 7-6, 7-5 and will now meet the Slovakian Karol Kucera, who came from behind to beat Michael Tibbitt 4-6, 7-6, 6-0. Henman traded four breaks of serve with the US Open winner from 1-1 in the first

set before the set went into a tie-break, which he won 7-5. At the start of the second set, however, Rafter broke Henman's serve and at one stage led 4-2. But the British No 2 broke back to level at 4-4 before squandering his first match point at 4-5.

Henman held on and earned two more match points two games later and although Rafter was able to save the first, on the second he volleyed a return out to give Henman victory.

Henman said afterwards: "I'm very pleased to have beaten Pat Rafter in front of his home fans. With him being US Open champion and No 2 in the world it's a big win for me, and it's a big boost to my confidence going into the Australian Open."

Henman never allowed Rafter to settle into any sort of rhythm and he admitted the quality of his returns won him the match. "I would say perhaps I could have served a little bit

more consistently, but at the end of the day I won and that's the most important thing."

Henman is unseeded for the first Grand Slam of the year, but has high hopes of going far in a tournament which he exited at the third-round stage 12 months ago. "I'm pretty happy with the way things are going. I couldn't have any complaints whether I win or lose tomorrow, so it's a good way to come into a Grand Slam," he said.

Henman has been drawn to face a qualifier in the first round of the Australian Open, as is the British No 1, Greg Rusedski, who is seeded five.

Rusedski also won yesterday, beating Austria's Thomas Muster 6-3, 7-6 in the Kooyong Classic. The win was Rusedski's first in three matches at the event, in which he, Pete Sampras and Muster were reduced to the consolation group. Sampras, however, slumped to his second

defeat in three days, losing 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, to Andrei Medvedev. Mark Philippoussis won a three-set battle with Gustavo Kuerten to reach today's final of the tournament, where he will play Andre Agassi.

Venus Williams reached the Sydney International final, beating Japan's Ai Sugiyama 6-1, 7-6, but an all-Williams final was not to be, her sister, Serena, losing 6-2, 6-1 to Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.



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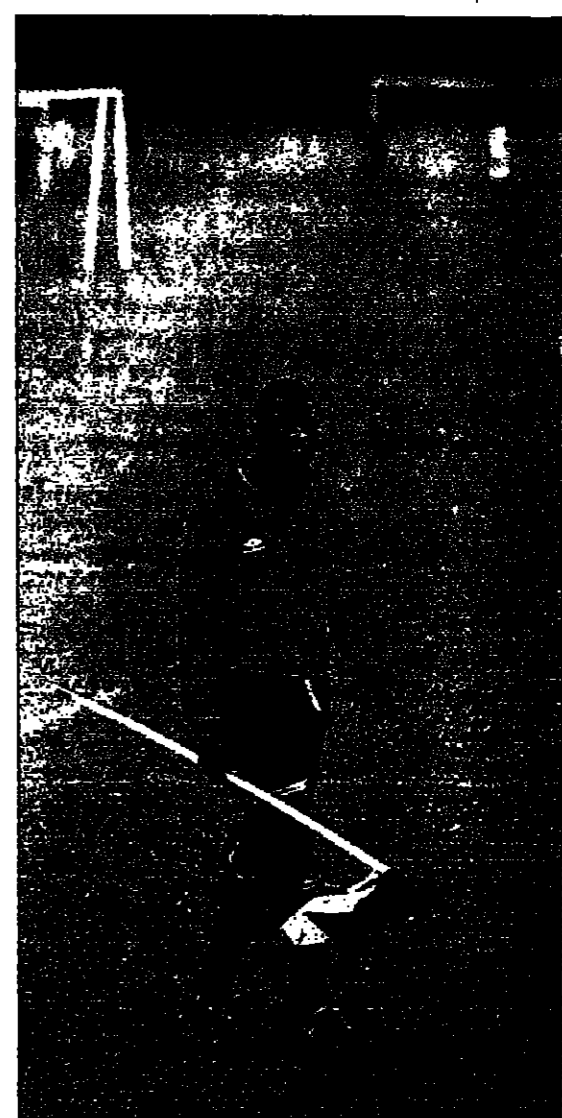
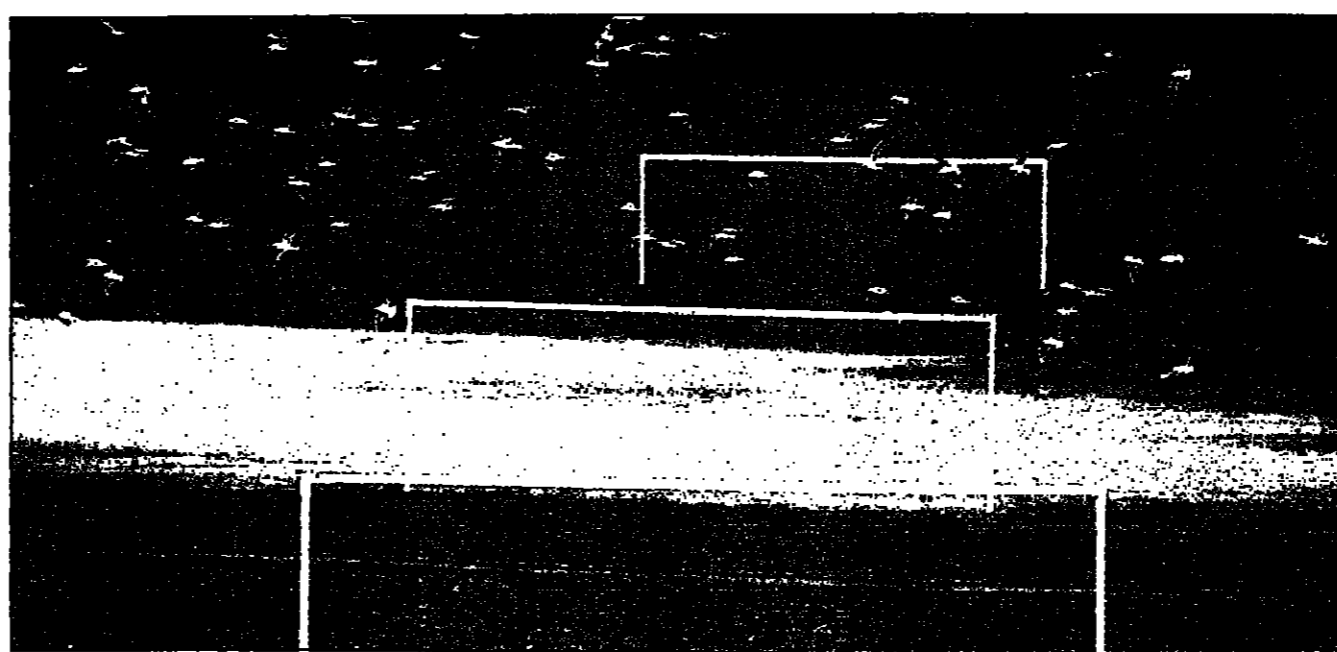
On Saturdays and Sundays throughout the winter the dreams, fantasies, aspirations and frustrations of men and women of all shapes, sizes, creeds and religions are played out on the parks football pitches of Britain. There are over 42,000 clubs affiliated to the Football Association in England alone and only 89 of them are professional, so for the vast majority it is a pitch like this that is home for the day. It was on a pitch like this that John Barnes was spotted by Watford, playing for Sunbury Court and no doubt dreaming of the day he would run through the entire Brazilian defence to score at the Maracana Stadium. And of course it was a pitch like this at Hackney Marshes, famous the world over as a park venue, that Kenny Dalglish had in mind when he issued his FA Cup challenge to Stevenage Borough.

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In its heyday Hackney Marshes housed 120 pitches side by side – today there are 88. As two teams come off two more go on, with well over 100 club matches taking place on a typical Sunday. It was there that Terry Venables played his schools football. More recently David Beckham and just about any footballer from London will have played at Hackney Marshes at some time in their youth. The St John Ambulance is always on hand and at many of the other parks venues up and down the country, while scouts from the professional clubs patrol the touchlines looking for the next John Barnes. But with 5,000 sports grounds sold for development to the private sector since 1981, the now 34-year-old Barnes may not be the only endangered species in British football.

– Adam Szreter

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY PETER JAY



Black market lure for frustrated World Cup fans

With the start of the World Cup still five months away, ticket sales and distribution are already causing problems for the organising committee and fans alike. As the authorities investigate the alleged illegal re-sale of seats, Nick Harris looks at the booming black market.

England supporters wanting to travel to France this summer have limited options for securing seats. Approximately 4,000 tickets for each group match will be available for the Football Association to distribute to their 32,000 travel club members.

Appeals made in Paris on Tuesday for more tickets are unlikely to result in more seats for British fans, although it will not be until the end of February that Fifa, the game's world governing body, will decide how to allocate the maximum of eight per cent of tickets per team set aside for the supporters in each game.

The only chance of any more tickets being available for England fans is if the national federations of Tunisia, Romania and Colombia say they do not require their share.

The other option for fans is to try to buy packages from operators authorised by Fifa, but demand is so high that applicants who have not already applied are unlikely to be successful.

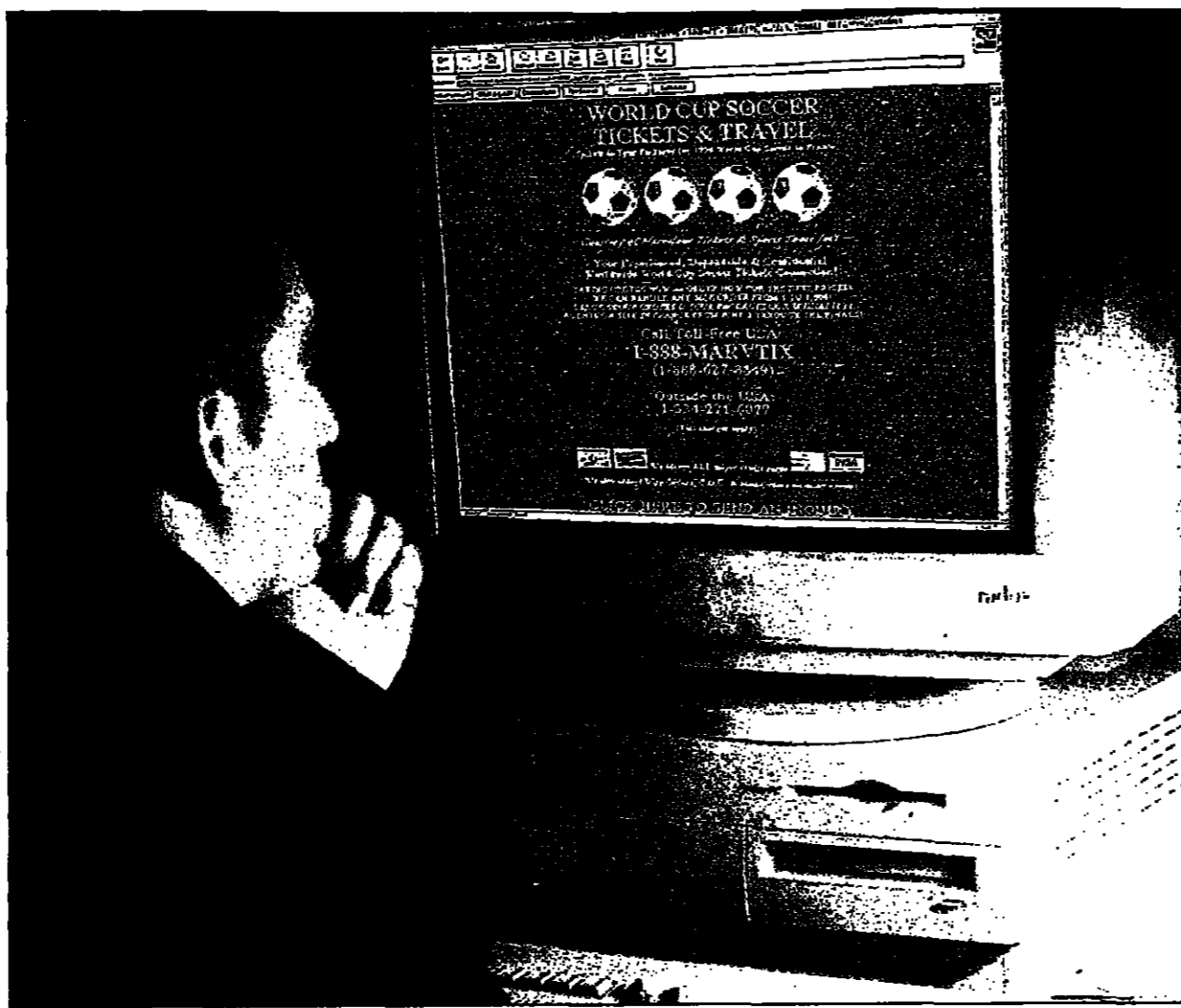
A spokeswoman for the French Organising Committee (CFO) said yesterday that 2,000 tickets for each group game (as opposed to the eight per cent figure reported previously) would be sold world-wide by the 17 tour operators authorised by the CFO to do so.

There are five such operators in Europe, three of them in England, and each will receive 100 tickets for each of the 32 group matches, regardless of the teams involved. In addition, they will receive 150 tickets per European team involved.

For the England game against Tunisia the European operators will receive a total of 250 tickets – the 100 basic allowance plus 150 because England are playing – and for the England game with Romania they will receive 400 (100 plus 150 for each team). These tickets can then be sold wherever the operators choose, including outside Europe.

Those tickets that are eventually sold to England fans will be in high demand, despite what many will consider to be high prices. Gullivers Sports Travel, one of the three Fifa-approved operators in this country, is asking for £295 for a day trip to one game. Mike Burton Sports Travel estimates a trip to the final will be around £1,500.

Two other means of attempting to buy World Cup tickets are therefore likely to prove attractive to some, even if it means circumventing the system. Either they can disregard the advice of "No ticket, do not travel" and turn up at the games



World Cup on the web: Several ticket agencies are advertising the sale of tickets for France this summer on the Internet

in the hope of buying from a tout, or they can turn to one of the numerous unofficial agents that are starting to emerge. These are mainly American agencies selling on the Internet, although there are also reports that companies are selling in Britain.

However, by no means all these agencies advertising on the Internet are unauthorised. Some Fifa-approved agencies also publicise their authorised ticket-and-travel packages on the web. Trading in tickets via unofficial sources is forbidden by the rules of the CFO and is under investigation. The CFO has warned the public that they should not be tempted to purchase from unofficial sources.

Any fan turning up at a

match with a ticket purchased from an unauthorised source could be refused entry, on the grounds that there has been a breach of contract in the terms of sale of the ticket. However, the CFO has said that it does not plan to have systematic identity checks at games, unless they have prior information that certain blocks of tickets have been sold via unauthorised agents.

Unauthorised tickets are being offered on the Internet for England's opening game, on 15 June against Tunisia, for between £174 and £411 each. Tickets for the game against Romania on 22 June are on offer at the same price, while tickets for the game against Colombia on 26 June are being advertised

between £206 and £475 each. Tickets for the quarter-final that might feature England if they progressed beyond the group stage are being offered at between £206 and £566, while semi-final tickets range from £269-£946 and tickets for the final are advertised at £775-£3,448 each. The face value of the majority of tickets for the finals is between £16 and £40 per match.

Some agencies claim they can provide as many tickets as required, with one advertising on the Internet that orders from "1 to 1,000" can be met, and another agent saying: "Quantity is not a problem. The disclaimer is that unless you pay in full now, in the event of the prices going

crazy, we can't guarantee these prices will stay the same."

While *The Independent* disclosed yesterday that an Atlanta-based agency, 24/7 Ticket Service, claims it is being supplied by Fifa-approved agents, other American agencies advertising on the Internet said their main source of tickets would be those French people who bought blocks of tickets (known as Pass France 98 and comprising of five or six tickets for one venue) in France between November 1996 and April 1997 and who are now willing to sell them to brokers and agents for profit.

One agent in America confirmed she would buy tickets from such sources to fulfil orders

from people who wish to buy from her. "Our tickets are sourced from all over the world," she said. "I buy from secondary markets and pay over the odds."

The CFO said tickets may only be sold to the public by themselves, their authorised tour operators and national football federations permitted by Fifa to sell tickets.

A CFO spokesman said: "We have the right to allow people to sell tickets and we want to protect that right." He added: "We won't let companies sell tickets that don't have the right to. We want tickets to be sold properly."

The spokesman said one company in France, which he could not name for legal rea-

sons, was already being investigated for illegal brokering activities and the trade had been stopped. Other traders in France, offering to buy and sell tickets, are being investigated.

"To protect the public, the CFO has taken legal action, and will continue to do so, against all those who offer tickets for sale without proper authorisation, in the interests of preventing and punishing any undertaking of this kind," a statement said.

The CFO added that, to enhance security, all World Cup tickets are nominal and will not be issued until May, but this has not proved sufficient to deter a black market.

It is not only British supporters who are unhappy. The Netherlands and Belgium meet in a group game on 13 June in the 80,000-seat Stade de France in Paris – yet they are likely to be allocated only 5,800 and 5,400 tickets, respectively.

Despite the fact the Brussels is only 85 minutes by train from Paris and the Dutch have large travelling support, the vast majority of available tickets will go to French supporters, travel agencies marketing world-wide, and corporate sponsors. It would be remarkable if some of these tickets did not end up in hands other than those for which they are intended.

In a statement released by the Dutch football association, the KNVB, a spokesman summed up the frustrations of the many who are willing, but unable, to attend by legitimate means. "The current division of tickets will simply play into the hands of black marketeers," he said.

World Cup Soccer Tickets & Travel

Call Toll Free USA 1-888-MARVITIX (1-888-627-8544)

Outside the USA 1-514-214-0777

The order will be as follows:

Date	Match	Tickets	Price
June 15	England v. Tunisia	50 tickets at \$500	\$19,500
June 22	England v. Romania	50 tickets at \$500	\$25,500
June 28	England v. Colombia	50 tickets at \$750	\$45,000
June 10	Scotland v. Brazil	25 tickets at \$650	\$16,250
June 14	Argentina v. Japan	12 tickets at \$550	\$6,600
June 20	Japan v. Croatia	24 tickets at \$650	\$15,600
June 26	Japan v. Jamaica	45 tickets at \$650	\$29,250
July 04	Lyons CF	100 tickets at \$600	\$60,000
July 08	Paris SF	50 tickets at \$800	\$40,000
July 12	Final	50 tickets at \$1900	\$95,000
		477 tickets	\$385,550

I look forward to providing these tickets for your company.

Best Regards,
Tim Crouch

When *The Independent* posed as a potential buyer of World Cup tickets, the Atlanta-based agency 24/7 Ticket Service sent back this fax confirming it could meet our request for 477 tickets. The tickets would have had a face value of approximately \$19,000. The price of \$385,550 (\$244,000) would have constituted an increase of nearly 1,200 per cent.

HOW ONE AMERICAN TICKET AGENCY IS ADVERTISING ON THE INTERNET

World Cup final tickets advertised on one Internet site fall into three categories, at all venues except: Jun 22 St Denis
for Stade de France in Saint Denis, where the opening and final games will be held. This venue will have four ticket categories due to its size: Category One: positioned in the "end" or "goal" lines, Category Two: positioned in the vicinity of the corners of the stadium, Category Three: positioned, in general, behind the goals. (Prices are in US dollars)

Date	Venue	Category	Price
Jun 10	St Denis	Category 1	\$75
Jun 10	St Denis	Category 2	\$25
Jun 10	St Denis	Category 3	\$25
Jun 11	Toulouse	Category 1	\$300
Jun 11	Toulouse	Category 2	\$250
Jun 11	Toulouse	Category 3	\$250
Jun 12	Lens	Category 1	\$325
Jun 12	Lens	Category 2	\$275
Jun 12	Lens	Category 3	\$275
Jun 13	Marseille	Category 1	\$300
Jun 13	Marseille	Category 2	\$250
Jun 13	Marseille	Category 3	\$250
Jun 14	St Denis	Category 1	\$375
Jun 14	St Denis	Category 2	\$325
Jun 14	St Denis	Category 3	\$325
Jun 15	Lyons	Category 1	\$300
Jun 15	Lyons	Category 2	\$250
Jun 15	Lyons	Category 3	\$250
Jun 16	Nantes	Category 1	\$300
Jun 16	Nantes	Category 2	\$250
Jun 16	Nantes	Category 3	\$250
Jun 17	Lens	Category 1	\$300
Jun 17	Lens	Category 2	\$250
Jun 17	Lens	Category 3	\$250
Jun 18	St Denis	Category 1	\$375
Jun 18	St Denis	Category 2	\$325
Jun 18	St Denis	Category 3	\$325
Jun 19	St Denis	Category 1	\$375
Jun 19	St Denis	Category 2	\$325
Jun 19	St Denis	Category 3	\$325
Jun 20	St Denis	Category 1	\$375
Jun 20	St Denis	Category 2	\$325
Jun 20	St Denis	Category 3	\$325
Jun 21	St Denis	Category 1	\$375
Jun 21	St Denis	Category 2	\$325
Jun 21	St Denis	Category 3	\$325
Jun 22	St Denis	Category 1	\$375
Jun 22	St Denis	Category 2	\$325
Jun 22	St Denis	Category 3	\$325

Love and peace, man – but I want the hard man back



THE GAFFER TAPES

It has been a long time coming but it still represents a landmark moment. Forty-four years after Barnestoneworth United beat us in the War Cup semi-final Jay Pann, the referee who gave that controversial last-minute goal against us, has issued an apology.

In his apology, issued in the *Stodgehope Gazette*, Pann, who also sent off three of our players and disallowed two goals, admits his behaviour was beyond the refereeing pole. He apologises for any unhappiness caused by his rulings and says his previous plea of mitigation, that he had a grudge against the club after they rejected him as a teenager, was contemptible.

There are those who see this apology as too little, too late and issued mainly for political reasons – Pann's grandson runs the Toyota dealership which is looking to expand by buying some land at our training ground. Personally I see it as a magnanimous gesture and I'll mention that to his grandson when I pick up my new car next week – I'm afraid the Ferrari's a write-off. I should never have lent it to that Georgian midfielder we had on loan.

The other main news is that Glenn Hoddle has brought Brian Heckinbottom back from his self-imposed exile in Goa. Our rough-tough centre-forward had gone away to find himself after being rejected by Jamaica. Hoddle sat down with him on the beach and, over a thali or two, and perhaps a hookah, persuaded Brian he was still in with a chance of making England's 22. How Glenn kept a straight face as he said that I'll never know.

However, the Brian that has returned is not the Brian "how do you like your hospital food?" Heckinbottom we know and fear. Brian was a player out of the Denis Smith mould, as Richie Barker said of Smith when he took over at West Brom last month, "If I asked him to kick a player he never asked why, he just said 'How high?'".

Brian's like that, though the game has moved on since those days of gentle clogging: he now uses an elbow which is much more effective.

We gave Brian a reserve match to test his fitness and he did not make a single foul in the game, not even a dead leg or a fist in the gookies. The one time he did bump into someone

he apologised. The callow youth who was down to mark him had spent two hours in the toilet beforehand and looked so pale when he ran out I thought he was a vegetarian. By the end he was puffing his shoulders out and glowing like Ron Atkinson after an afternoon under his favourite sun-lamp.

Well, I gave Brian a right bollocking in the dressing-room, called him a big girl's blouse, a pantie-waist and all sorts of non-PVC names. This would normally get him shoving me against a wall with a broken Lucozade bottle in his hand (one reason why we now use plastic ones) but he just sat there whimpering. "I'm sorry boss, I didn't want to let anyone down but it's wrong to hurt your fellow man. He was only a young lad and he looked a bit ill as well."

Either Hoddle's overdone the counselling or the Moonies must have got hold of him in Goa. I guess I should have realised when he came in wearing a kaftan. Then, when Leroy cut it up he didn't even hit him. He just said: "I can understand your anger, you must deal with as you can", and got his sewing kit out.

I think we might have to send

him to Lincoln City on loan so John Beck can toughen him up.

In the meantime we've a problem at centre-forward so I'm following up Ego Massive's tip and heading for Central America. Apparently there's a real head-case No 9, but with a delicate first touch, out there. He's called Che Revolta and all the big clubs are after him but there have been complications: he plays up country in the jungle and most of their scouts have failed to reach him.

I obviously can't trust Kit Maan to find him, so I'm flying out myself after today's game. I've got all the essentials: Swiss Army knife, Immodium, and that back copy of *Shoot!* magazine with a picture of me coaching the England Under-23s in it.

We need a lift. We're bottom again after last week's defeat. We need a win today but will be missing Ivor Niggie (a nasty cut after he impaled himself on his ceremonial sword) and Shaun Prone (food-poisoning after undercooked sushi). Brian can't make it either, he's attending a consciousness-raising class in Islington.

Barry Gaffer was talking to Glenn Moore

MAJOR WEEKEND FIXTURES AND POOLS CHECK

TODAY

3.0 unless stated

FA Carling Premiership

- 1 Barnsley v Crystal Palace
- 2 Blackburn v Aston Villa
- 3 Coventry v Arsenal
- 4 Leeds v Sheffield Wed
- 5 Leicester v Liverpool
- 6 Newcastle v Bolton
- 7 Tottenham v West Ham
- 8 Wimbledon v Derby

Nationwide Football League

- 9 Birmingham v Huddersfield
- 10 Man City v Sunderland
- 11 Middlesbrough v Ipswich
- 12 Norwich v Nottm Forest
- 13 Oxford Utd v Charlton
- 14 Port Vale v Portsmouth
- 15 QPR v Tranmere
- 16 Sheffield Utd v Wolves
- 17 Swindon v Reading
- 18 West Bromwich v Crewe

Second Division

- 19 Blackpool v Bournemouth
- 20 Bristol Rovers v Burnley
- 21 Chesterfield v Plymouth
- 22 Fulham v Wycombe
- 23 Gillingham v York
- 24 Grimsby v Brentford
- 25 Millwall v Wrexham
- 26 Northampton v Carlisle
- 27 Oldham v Luton
- 28 Southend v Walsall
- 29 Watford v Preston
- 30 Wigan v Bristol City

Third Division

- 31 Chester v Barnet
- 32 Exeter v Doncaster
- 33 Leyton Orient v Brighton
- 34 Macclesfield v Hartlepool
- 35 Mansfield v Southport
- 36 Notts County v Cardiff
- 37 Peterborough v Rochdale
- 38 Rotherham v Darlington
- 39 Scarborough v Lincoln City
- 40 Shrewsbury v Cambridge Utd
- 41 Swansea v Hull
- 42 Belf's Scottish League Premier Division
- 43 Aberdeen v Durnhamline
- 44 Dundee Utd v Celtic
- 45 Hibernian v St Johnstone
- 46 Kilmarnock v Hearts
- 47 Rangers v Motherwell

First Division

- 48 Alderley v Accrington
- 49 Bolton v Dundee
- 50 Hamilton v Stirling Albion (N)
- 51 Raith v Falkirk
- 52 St Mirren v Partick

Second Division

- 53 Brechin v Queen of South
- 54 Inverness CT v Clyde
- 55 Livingston v Clydebank
- 56 Stenhousemuir v Forfar
- 57 Stranraer v East Fife

Third Division

- 58 Alloa v Ayr
- 59 Berwick v East Stirling
- 60 Cowdenbeath v Albion Rovers
- 61 Dumbarton v Queen's Park
- 62 Montrose v Ross County

TOMORROW

FA Carling Premiership

- Everton v Chelsea (4.0)
- Nationwide Football League First Division
- Bury v Stockport (10)



FOOTBALL AROUND THE WORLD BY RUPERT METCALF

Ukraine

One of Europe's most legendary and formidable coaches gave a rare interview this week in which he poured scorn on the reputations of both Ronaldo and Shearer.

The 58-year-old former Soviet Union coach, who has taken Dynamo Kiev to the quarter-finals of the European Cup, is not a fan of the star system. "Stars block development in football. They cost a lot but lack a motivation. They've got everything and need nothing," he said.

"Look at Ronaldo," he said of Internazionale's Brazilian. "He's not developing. I watched him once. In the first half he simply stood and waited. Five minutes before the break he scored a goal. But if he hadn't scored, what then? What's the point in having such a star, who doesn't put in any work?"

Lobanovsky was no kinder about Shearer. "What is Shearer? I'm not sure I'd have him in the Dynamo squad," he declared. "We made a video of him playing. He touched the ball 10 times, nine of them standing with his back to goal. He didn't get a shot in. He was hopeless – but he is a star."

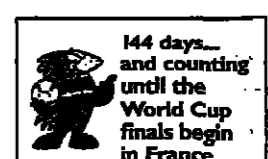
Spain

The Spanish First Division club Racing Santander have taken out an unusual insurance policy – against relegation to the Second Division.

In the event of dropping out of the top flight, Racing would be paid about £6m to compensate for the loss of lucrative television royalties. The policy, thought to be the first of its kind, will cost the club £1m over two seasons. Racing, currently in their fifth successive season in the First Division after six years in the Second and Third, are currently drifting in mid-table.

Brazil

The temperamental striker Edmundo, banished from the national team for indiscipline last year, was forgiven and recalled this week by Brazil's coach, Mario Zagallo, for next month's Concacaf Gold Cup in the United States. Edmundo has not played for his country since the final of the *Copa America* in June. Then, he elbowed a Bolivian opponent in an off-the-ball incident and was substituted by a livid Zagallo.



144 days... and counting until the World Cup finals begin in France

Iran have named Torstian Ivic as the new coach of their national team. The arrival of the 63-year-old Croat ends a long search by the Iranian Football Federation for a replacement for the Brazilian, Valdeir Vieira, who was originally hired to coach the Olympic team but was switched to the senior squad late in Iran's successful World Cup qualifying campaign before being deemed surplus to requirements. In a long career, Ivic has been in charge of Hajduk Split, Anderlecht, Porto, Ajax, Atletico Madrid, Paris St-Germain and Middlesbrough. He has also coached the United Arab Emirates and, briefly in 1994, Croatia.

– Rupert Metcalfe

Travelling man Ward strikes camp at battling Barnsley

After a transfer, an operation, fatherhood and house-moving problems, Ashley Ward was hoping for a more stable 1997 with Derby County.

It did not work out like that. The striker has been hit for sixes and sevens, and not just while playing for his latest club, Barnsley. He has also suffered from meningitis. But, despite last week's thrashing by West Ham, Glenn Moore found him still in an upbeat mood.

Last April Ashley Ward sat back in the bath in the visitor's dressing-room at Old Trafford and thought contentedly "I bet this won't happen very often". Manchester United had just been beaten at home and Ward, a Manchester City supporter as a boy, had scored in Derby County's surprise victory.

Six months later he went back to Old Trafford, this time with Barnsley. As he recalled this week, "normal service was resumed". Barnsley were beaten 7-0.

Such a scoreline has become as much a feature of Barnsley's season as United's, only Barnsley usually have the "nil". Last week they were beaten 6-0 by West Ham United and, as with the 5-0 at Arsenal and 6-0 at home to Chelsea, the sages nodded and said "I knew they were out of their depth".

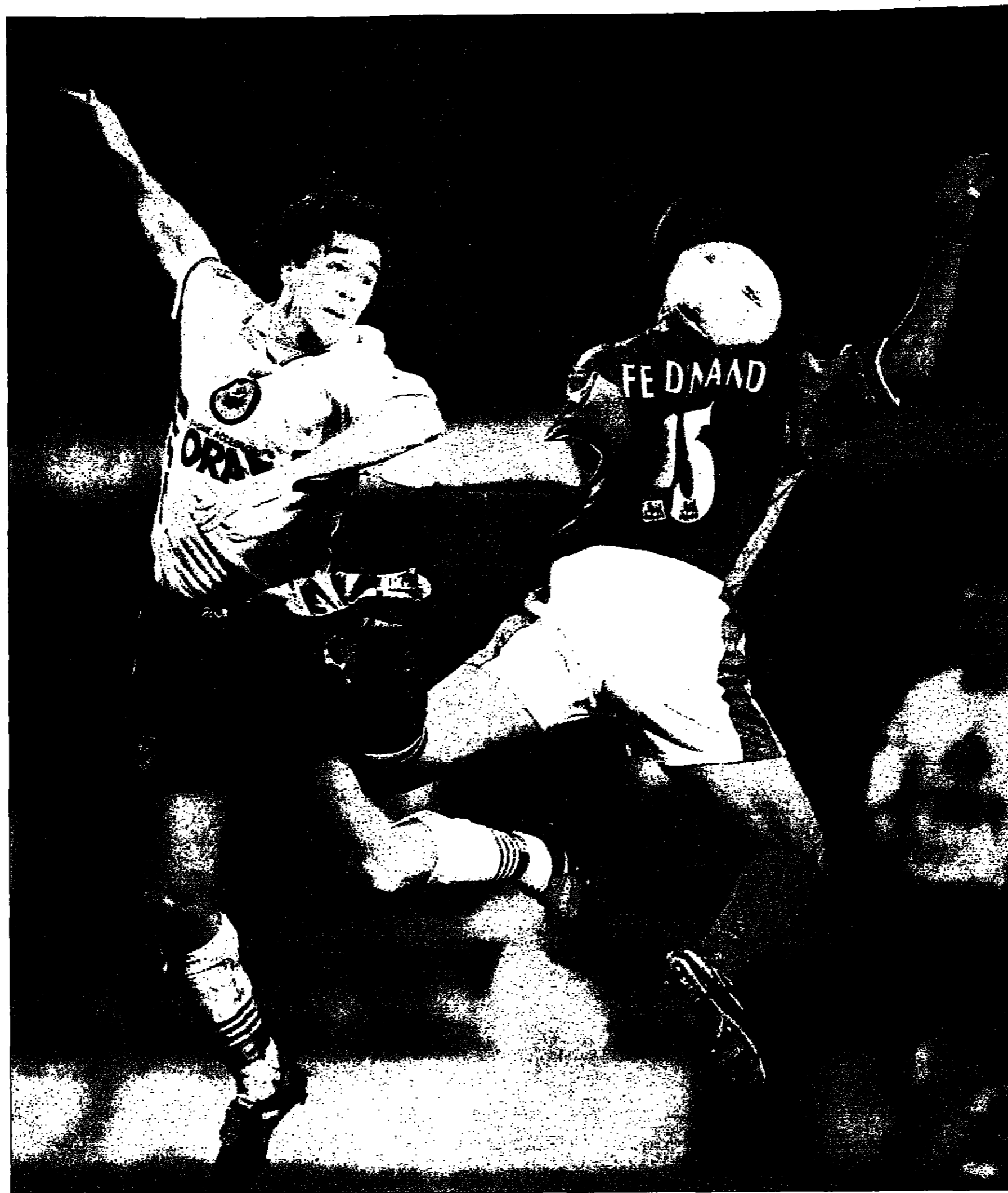
Yet Barnsley are still only two points adrift at the bottom and five points behind today's opponents at Oakwell, Crystal Palace, who occupy the last safety position.

"We've had some good performances, especially at home," Ward said, "that's why we are still in with a shout. If we beat Palace we go two points behind them and most of the teams in the bottom half have got to come to our place [only Coventry, of the bottom nine, are still to play Barnsley at home].

"I knew it would be tough when I joined, everyone did, but we were starting to get it right. We had a terrible time at Tottenham [0-3], but apart from that we were doing well. Ade Moses and Arjan de Zeeuw were getting it together at the back and we had conceded one goal in the last three games, which was pretty good considering the way they've been going in. But Ade and Arjan were suspended last Saturday [against West Ham], we had to bring in two new lads, one making a debut, the other playing his second game, and we got hammered again."

The new pairing were not the only ones at fault and it would have been pretty quiet in the away dressing-room at Upton Park had Danny Wilson not been dishing out a major bollocking. "The gaffer was furious," Ward said. "It was a bad performance."

"It is difficult to lift yourself afterwards, it's humiliating. Professionals are not used to it. From an early age they have usually played in the better teams and it's not often people get whacked in the Premiership."



Fighting spirit: Barnsley's Ashley Ward shows his commitment to the Barnsley cause during last week's heavy defeat at West Ham United

Photograph: Allsport

I put it to Ward, by way of consolation, that some of us have suffered 6-0 stuffings at regular intervals in our footballing life, but he responds, gently but with feeling: "It doesn't matter when you're playing for the Lion and Lamb. This is our livelihood."

Ward's ability to earn that livelihood was threatened last autumn when he was diagnosed as suffering from meningitis. The prospect of not being able to play football was the least of his worries as he waited for the results of the tests.

"It was frightening," he said. "The first few days they didn't know what type it was - the other type's a killer. My health is fine now, but I was ill for a week or so, then had to do nothing for a month. That was frustrating, especially as I had

just gone to a new club. It was similar to when I went to Derby and needed a groin operation almost immediately."

When we last met in December 1996, Ward was striking up a good partnership with Dean Sturridge as

Derby settled well in their first season back in the top flight. He ended the season with a reasonable eight goals from 25 starts and retained his place for the current campaign, but in September Jim Smith called him into his office.

"I was playing every game, but Jim told me an offer had come in and it was up to me. That move or less makes your mind up for you. Derby had earlier said they would not sell Dean for £5m but they were prepared to let me go for rather less than a fortune (£1.3m, rising to £1.55m if Barnsley stay up), so it was obviously time to move on."

"I didn't want to risk being in reserves. Jim's always looking to the foreign market and he'd brought in Paulo Wanchope and Francesco Balzano as well as Dean Burton."

It was time for his sixth club in total and fourth in three years. "When I spoke to Danny I wasn't sure, but it's worked out great for me. I love it here. The supporters have been fantastic, the best I've come across. They've never once turned on the team, maybe they appreciate the difficulty of the task, but not every crowd would."

Most of Ward's moves have been at his employers' instigation and there have been reports that he may be sold if Barnsley are relegated. "You never know, but I'd like to stay here," he said.

The liking for Barnsley is partly because he has been able to move back to his native Manchester and, after years of housing problems caused by his regular transfers, he will shortly be moving into a converted barn which has been rebuilt by his father-in-law. With a second daughter due next month it will not be a moment too soon.

The first daughter was named Darby less than a month before he moved from Norwich City to Derby two years ago. "I've already had a few comments, but we won't be naming her after a football team," he said.

Ward, who has managed five goals in 18 matches for Barnsley, including very satisfying winners against Liverpool (at Anfield) and Derby, may have a new partner today. Norway's Jan Age Fjortoft was signed from Sheffield United for £800,000 on Thursday.

"I assume he's support for me but you never know," Ward said. "It should be enjoyable playing with him. He's got experience, scores a few goals and is a big lad, so I won't have to challenge for every high ball now."

Three of the Premiership bottom four were promoted last year and three of the First Division's top four relegated which would suggest the gap is getting ever bigger.

"There is a gap. One problem for us is that teams down with us like Tottenham can bring in players like Klinsmann and Bernd. There's no way we can do that - they may be on free transfers, but the wages are beyond us. The teams that have just come up struggle with injuries. We don't have the depth, not just in numbers but in quality."

"The speed of thought is a big difference. If you are pulled out of position in the Premiership someone goes in the space, in the First Division you can get away with it. People make better runs. You don't get as many goal chances either, for every chance you get at Barnsley you would probably get three for United or Liverpool. But I knew that when I signed."

You've just got used to a player when suddenly he's off

Among the many snippets of information I've gleaned in recent weeks from the pages of this newspaper was one telling me that the Portuguese striker Paulo Alves had returned home after a loan spell with West Ham. In essence, it wasn't a particularly spectacular nugget of information: Alves had made such little impact at Upton Park that I (and, I suspect, many Hammers fans) had forgotten he'd even arrived in the first place.

But that's the loan deals for you. In my opinion the loan - or temporary transfer as they like to call it - is a strange beast. It's as integral to our game as the penalty shoot-out, yet it can be as infuriatingly unsatisfactory.

For every player who has a loan deal to thank for kick-starting his career (Brett Angell hadn't managed to score for Sunderland when he went on loan to Sheffield United, West Brom and finally Stockport, where his goals earned him a permanent contract), there's another for whom getting farmed out on loan is essentially a passport to obscurity (Shaun Teale, an England possibility just a few seasons ago, went on loan from Tranmere to Preston last February and little has been heard of him since).

And for fans, loan deals can be maddening. I mean, you've just got used to a player when suddenly he's off without so much as a "so long and thanks for the memories" (if there are any, some deals last no longer than a month).

Take Alves' compatriot Hugo Porfiri. His skills made him a cult figure during his loan spell at West Ham, yet the Hammers couldn't match the pesetas on offer for him.

Not that it bothered Harry Redknapp much. He says Porfiri "did a good job for us at the time", and claims loans are "a great idea. You get a player on loan for a few months, he tries his heart out to win himself a contract and you just pay his wages while you get to have a good long look at him."

But he wishes he'd got Marco Boegers, Paulo Futre and Florin Raducioiu on loan before shelling out the best part of £5m for them.

Still, the West Ham manager has other reasons for advocating loans. If it were up to him he'd farm out every kid, to broaden their horizons as well as their skills. Most recently, Rio Ferdinand sampled life on the South Coast at Bournemouth while Frank Lampard Jr went to Swansea; both returned better - and



OLIVIA BLAIR

ON THE INADEQUACIES OF THE LOAN SYSTEM

(supposedly) more mature players - for the experience.

Redknapp says: "You don't get the same experiences playing reserve-team football where it's a mix of slightly soured seniors and youngsters trying for their lives. First-team football is a different ball-game altogether, plus they don't get pampered in the lower divisions. They might get a cup of tea, but you can forget the laundry and the boots cleaned. It's character building, if nothing else."

Alex Ferguson would no doubt agree. He's made a habit of farming out his fledg-

lings, among them Terry Cooke (to Sunderland and Birmingham), Michael Appleton (to Lincoln and Grimsby) and Ben Thornley (to Huddersfield and Stockport). Even David Beckham was loaned to Preston.

Similarly, Newcastle sent Darren Huckerby on loan to Millwall, but their hand was rather forced since Kevin Keegan had disbanded the reserves at St James' Park and Huckerby wasn't playing any football at all.

But for all a loan deal benefits a young player and is useful to a manager as a precursor to a permanent signing, loans are arranged, more often than not, to get a club out of a spot of bother. Call me a cynic, but I can't see Jürgen Klinsmann staying at Spurs beyond May. Spurs say they've signed him until the end of the season; I say it's just a glorified loan deal. And will Tomas Brodin really stay in London SE25 when the season ends, particularly if it means playing First Division football? I think not.

Over in Europe, of course, clubs can sign as many players as they want on loan and those players are even allowed to play against the club holding their registration. (In France, they have a "joker" system

whereby clubs can apply to sign a player on loan at any time of the season - even outside the transfer windows - when a crisis seems it necessary. In other words, when they can make a good case for doing so.

But then in most European leagues there is greater fluidity of movement between the divisions; our top clubs are more self-interested. Football Association rules decree that Premier League clubs cannot conduct loans deals between themselves, except in the case of goalkeepers, and only then when the circumstances are "extenuating".

So, loans can only be conducted between Premier League and Nationwide League clubs, and each club can only sign two players on loan at any one time up to a maximum of five per season. (That latter figure has increased this season, so if it seems to you - as it does to me - that there are more and more loan deals nowadays, then you'd be right).

Which means that the temporary transfer is here to stay, in its many shapes and forms. Still, I have to admit that for all my dislike of it, were anyone to lend us a full-back or a ball-winning midfielder (and I'm speaking as a Spurs fan here), I wouldn't say no.

Why earache is Semitic soccer's biggest headache

The date: 14 April, 1974. The place: Mitcham Common. (Twenty-four Jewish lads south of the river? This is tantamount to Yasser Arafat praying at the Western Wall). The occasion: the final of The Referees' Invitation Trophy, Jewish football's premier cup competition, making the choice of the venue even more bizarre. We all came from Hendon and Edgware.

Our opponents were Athletic Neadsen, the kings of Semitic soccer, unbeaten in three seasons. Until now. We beat them one-nil on penalties. The first 10 penalties were all missed - or saved - so the referee, eager as we were to get back for lunch, moved the spot forward by two feet (but to you, three). Neadsen missed kick number 11, we scored the next, and I lifted the trophy, presented in a blaze of flashbulbs by a kosher butcher from Finchley.

We were Bar Kochba FC, the "ch" pronounced the Scottish way, as in ooh aye, named after a Jewish revolutionary who, it is rumoured, was the first Biblical character to wear moulded studs.

We played in the Maccabi Sunday League, where all teams had to be all-Jewish. Now this gave rise to a number of problems, but one in

particular. Jews aren't physical, we argue. You get no real injuries in Jewish football - just earache. So what we did was this. We signed a ringer, a hard man, a non-Jew, a player who was not only a cut above ability-wise, but one who could put himself about a bit. In a team of Hoddles we wanted a Hunter (that's Norman, not Hillman). Our ringer was Stevie Prince. No one knows for sure why he wanted to play for us. We were to football what Woody Allen is to baby-sitting.

FAN'S EYE VIEW
NO 240
BAR KOCHBA FC
BY
PETER MOSS

But I do know he liked the name Bar Kochba. He thought it was a pub in Poland.

Stevie Prince - or Sheldon Pinkus, the name adopted for registration - was a great asset. But he did have to be ever so circumspect in the changing-room when the other team were about, him being the odd man out in an otherwise forskin-free zone.

Most of our team were estate agents - that's just the way it worked out - so we

knew how to pick a home ground. No Hackney Marshes for us; even Wormwood Scrubs became passé once we made our move to Hampstead Heath Extension, a particularly Jewish area of north London. (It would be Who but a Jew would take a place like Hampstead Heath and add an extension?)

It was a pleasure to get sent off on the Extension, if only to have a little more time to admire the ornate mansions - one of which was home to Elizabeth Taylor - that abutted our hallowed turf. Once, the referee, senior partner at the firm of surveyors where I did my articles, sent me off for arguing with him over the value of a house that backed on to our pitch. Only in Jewish football!

Bar Kochba exist today only as a memory. I still see many of the lads: some of them I play five-a-side with, and Radlett Ralph I meet across the tennis net down at the David Lloyd. But not Stevie. So Stevie, if you're reading this, and you need a flying winger ringer for your goyische team, call me. I'm no Ryan Giggs, but God knows I can talk the opposition into near terminal somnolence. And what's more, my mum still makes a mean salt beef sandwich!



Saturday 17 January 1998

World Cup organisers launch crackdown on ticket touts

The World Cup organisers will take firm action to stop any unauthorised trade in tickets for this summer's tournament. Nick Harris reports.

The French Organising Committee for the World Cup (CFO) will take all measures necessary to ensure that tickets for the tournament are sold according to its rules.

As *The Independent* revealed yesterday, World Cup tickets are being advertised - particularly on the Internet - by unauthorised agents. A CFO spokeswoman said yesterday: "If we have evidence that tickets are bought through unauthorised sources, we will stop the tickets."

Tickets will not be distributed until late in May and the CFO's most effective method of stopping a black market will be simply not to issue tickets where it can prove they are part of an unauthorised trade.

The CFO hopes this will encourage fans only to buy through authorised operators. If they buy via unauthorised sources, they risk either buying a ticket they will not receive or one they might not be able to use.

In cases where the CFO believes that tickets have been bought on the black market, it may organise random identity checks on match days. Fans in possession of such tickets will risk being refused entry.

The spokeswoman said that, in the meantime, the CFO would

investigate all instances around the world where unauthorised trade is suspected. *The Independent* reported yesterday that an unofficial American-based agency, 24/7 Ticket Service, is offering to sell via the Internet tickets it claims are provided by FIFA-approved operators.

The spokeswoman said: "Fifa and the CFO are investigating all reports of tickets being sold on the Internet and through unauthorised sources at inflated prices. We are taking this very seriously."

The CFO said that anyone found selling tickets suspected of being unauthorised would be asked to prove their sources. If they are found to be contravening CFO rules, they will be warned to stop. If they persist, the CFO hopes to take legal action to stop them. "Our lawyers are looking, country by country, to see what action we can take as soon as possible," the spokeswoman said.

The CFO has already taken action against a company in France which was advertising

that it was buying and selling tickets. The CFO stopped the trade by asking a newspaper to stop carrying the agent's advertisements and by threatening the agent with legal action. The CFO said it was also looking into other similar cases in France.

The organisers also clarified yesterday precisely how many tickets are available for each game and how they will be allocated. Around 61 per cent of the stadiums' net capacities have been allocated to French fans, 20 per cent to Fifa (for

competing teams' fans and national federations), 12 per cent to sponsors (around a third of these being for French sponsors) and around seven per cent to Fifa-approved tour operators.

The CFO also pointed out that the number of tickets actually available during the World Cup is considerably fewer than has been widely reported.

England's opening game, for example, on 15 June against Tunisia, takes place in the

60,000-capacity Stade Vélodrome in Marseille. The capacity for World Cup games, however, will be 50,000 at most and possibly less.

This is because the media platform for journalists and TV cameras takes up the space of 8,000 seats, up to 1,000 seats have been set aside for VIP use, and other seats will not be used because their view will be obscured for a variety of reasons (including TV cameras).

World Cup tickets on the Internet, page 20

Shearer poised to make comeback

There was good news for Newcastle and England supporters yesterday when Kenny Dalglish announced that Alan Shearer was ready to return to action. Carl Little reports.

Kenny Dalglish, the Newcastle manager, has promised to make a "responsible" decision on Alan Shearer's fitness before today's game with Bolton at St James' Park.

Dalglish yesterday revealed that Shearer had completed a full training session without suffering any adverse reaction to his injuries and would be considered for selection.

The England striker has been out since damaging ankle ligaments in the Umbro tournament at Goodison Park last July.

"Alan is in consideration. He's done everything expected of him in training," Dalglish said. "He's gone through all the extensive routines he has to go

through and has shown no reaction to his injuries. There was just a little bit of soreness after Tuesday's practice match."

Shearer is poised to make his comeback, but Dalglish stressed that he would not take risks with his £15m striker. "We'll make a decision on Alan as responsible men," he said. "We're not going to be stupid but he's done very well in training and I repeat - he's in consideration."

At Shearer's old club, Blackburn Rovers, manager Roy Hodgson has made a surprise £6m bid for the Italian striker Pierluigi Casiraghi. Hodgson is waiting for a reply from Lazio about an inquiry on the table, that could now be activated, to bring Casiraghi to Ewood Park.

Lazio are trying to tie up a £13m deal for Chilean striker Marcelo Salas, once a Manchester United target, with his club River Plate this weekend, which Hodgson hopes will mean that Casiraghi will be available. A medical stands between Faustino Asprilla and a move from Newcastle back to Parma. The fee, believed to be just over

£6m, has been agreed and the deal seems likely to be completed over the weekend.

Sasa Curcic's proposed move to the Turkish club Besiktas has broken down, at least until the summer. The Aston Villa midfielder, signed from Bolton Wanderers 18 months ago, had been in Istanbul for talks with Besiktas' coach, John Toshack.

Ruud Gullit has asked Fifa, the game's world governing body, to help stop his players missing vital Premiership games through international games. The Chelsea manager's squad could be depleted by friendlies and training camps leading up to the World Cup, and Gullit is hoping for some give and take.

"We are still arguing to keep our players here," he said. "They earn their money here. Their priorities must be here. I'm not at war with Fifa. I just want to explain the situation and I hope I can rely on a bit of compassion."

Sam Hammam, the Wimbledon chairman, has asked for patience from Dons supporters after a plan to move the club to a new purpose-built venue near their old Plough Lane ground fell through. Problems with capacity, parking, layout and feasibility have caused the club to go back to the drawing board.

"If a suitable site exists, then I'm confident the council will help us find it and make it work," Hammam said.

The French goalkeeper Bernard Lama is back at West Ham after failing to secure a move to a club in France and is now set to stay for the rest of the season. Lama is unhappy that he has not been given a chance after joining the Hammers on loan and returned home last week to try to find first-team football in order to keep his World Cup hopes alive.

Premiership preview, page 23



Michael Atherton, the England captain, glances a boundary as the winter tour gets under way against Jamaica at Montego Bay yesterday. Report, page 17; Photograph: Laurence Griffiths/Emphas

Middlesbrough agree £4m fee for unsettled Dublin

Middlesbrough have agreed a £4m fee with Coventry for striker Dion Dublin, after he turned down a £3m contract at Highfield Road worth £16,000 a week on Tuesday.

Viv Anderson, Boro's assistant manager, said: "Dublin is a good player who can play in several positions. We have agreed a fee but there is a long way to go before he walks in the door. It is not hard and fast he will sign for us. Transfer talks have not started with the player. We are hoping to hear something in the next 48 hours."

Wimbledon, Crystal Palace and Leicester have also been linked with the former United striker - with Palace already having had a £3.25m bid rejected.

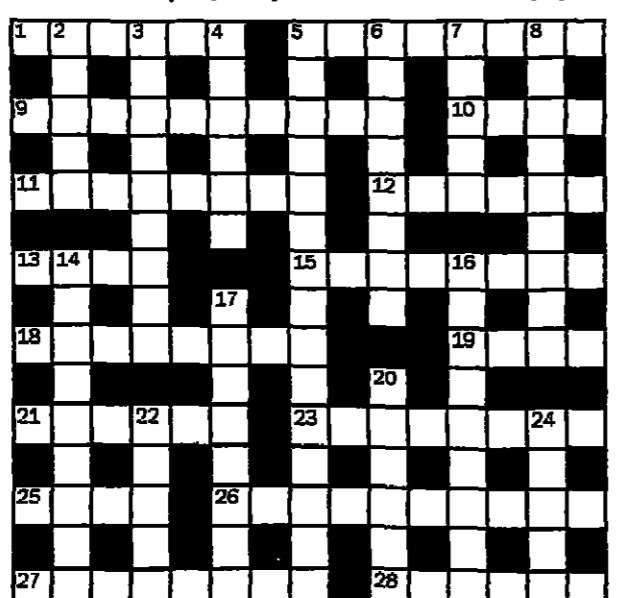
Gordon Strachan, the Coventry manager, refused to confirm Dublin's imminent departure, saying yesterday: "He is in our team against Arsenal and he will captain the side."

"He is playing as well as he ever has and our relationship is extremely good. I would like to think that this is not his farewell match. I expect him to be here for as long as we can keep him,"

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3510, Saturday 17 January

By Spuria



Friday's solution

BACKLASH SCARED
TO O O O O O
GAMESUR BUFFER
P I A O P I K
TALNEOROUND
U S T E F U
INCUR TRIATHLON
N A E H N A O F
EXTRAVERI INORA
S E P A H M R I
PRIMENUMBER
O F O R O N O N
O R I G I N E P E G A T E
L I W E A R S
Y O M A T O I N S P A I D S

Last Saturday's solution

GLOBETROTTER
O O O A S E E Y
K O W L O C K M A S S E U R
O B K E O Y O D A
D A R K H O R S E B I R D
T E E U T P N
H Y D R A N T S M I D G E N
E R R L G
B A C K L O G S C O T T I E
O O V A A I O S
A L L Y B L I N D S P O T
R O D A C B R N A
D I G R A P H T U R N O U T
S E N Y A U A E
B E S T I D E M A N N E R

ACROSS

- University students found penning Greek letter difficult (6)
- Improvement achieved in theatre by taking out a few lines (4-4)
- Quaintly picturesque elder wood left to grow (4-6)
- Hint of orange in Benedictine spells ruin (4)
- Large Latin American community not in favour of tucking into milk pudding (8)
- Everyone comes round night before exam (1-5)
- Record shows island's in care of District Commissioner (4)
- One's in a splint having suffered uncontrolled descent (8)
- Disease present in grape, all shrivelled up (8)
- What was on at the Coliseum - The Robe? (4)
- Let's do something with your hair! (6)
- Go abroad - maybe Kuwait, around head of Gulf (8)
- Young girl having a month in France and Germany (4)
- Reported sick first - that's foolish (3-7)
- Spray making one moister, possibly? (8)
- Team still to go by overhead railroad (6)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hand-drawn copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: D Fielding, London E1; R Finch, Bridgford; E George, Holywell; J McIntosh, Glasgow; N Tabor, Knights.

DOWN

- Old US President introducing a measure originally from Europe? (5)
- Ad one client pulled to bits, all the same (9)
- Thing for scrubbing lavatory, note (6)
- Left-wing sympathiser and Roman chap changing places (6-9)
- Old man's beard held in by elastic, roughly a metre (8)
- Deposit daughter's carried in box (5)
- Efflorescence running across East River (9)
- In final stage of game tangle turns ugly (9)
- Positioned funerary receptacle in oriental grave (9)
- Personal boosters, say, initially optimising effects of drugs? (3-5)
- Duke's involved in race round day centre (6)
- Means of communication whereby doctor gets medicine sent up (5)
- Subject English master's included in article (5)

RUGBY UNION

Yates' legal team pushes for delay in ear-biting hearing

Lawyers representing Kevin Yates, the Bath prop suspended pending further investigations into last weekend's ear-biting scandal, are attempting to delay next week's disciplinary hearing.

Chris Hewett says that whatever the timing, the West Country club are determined to get at the truth.

The barrack room lawyers who inhabit every rugby clubhouse in the land may have to wait longer than they think for a solution to the Great Bath Ear-Biting Mystery. The legal team representing the prime suspect, Kevin Yates, say they have been given insufficient time to prepare their defence and are pushing for a postponement of the internal hearing scheduled for Tuesday.

Yates, the 26-year-old loose-head prop capped twice by England in Argentina last summer, was one of three Bath front-rowers cited for foul play by London

Scottish after Simon Fenn, the Bath flanker, suffered a serious injury to his left ear during a cup tie at the Recreation Ground a week ago. Yates' fellow prop, Victor Ubogu, was cleared by Scottish on Wednesday and yesterday, the same officials publicly exonerated Federico Mendez, the third member of the triumvirate.

If the Londoners expected Bath to greet the news with a fanfare of trumpets, they were mistaken. "It is up to them to decide if apologies are in order," said Tony Swift, the Bath chief executive. "I've no idea why they felt the need to cite all three players. We've collected evidence from both sides and there has not been a mention of either Mendez or Ubogu, but we're not prepared to get into a slanging match over it. This is not a game to be won, a competition to see who can issue the best press release."

"I can only describe the last few days as horrific. People have been baying for action and believe me, I would love to get to the truth of the matter; get it sorted and get on with running this rugby club. However, it's going to be far more difficult to reach that stage than anyone imagined in the two or three days following the

alleged incident. I promise you, it's not an easy situation."

The tribunal will be chaired by an independent legal expert and made up of two club directors, neither of whom will have been involved in the investigation, and two club members, almost certainly players, of his own choosing.

London Scottish said in a statement that Fenn is making a good recovery under the circumstances "but has suffered a temporary loss of hearing in his left ear. Understandably, he has been further upset and depressed by the outrageous comments made by Philip Bliss."

Bliss, honorary surgeon to the Bath club but not one of the medical staff on duty last week, suggested that Fenn's injuries might not have been caused by a bite. Yesterday, Swift continued to distance the club from their own medic's point of view.

The unions of France, Scotland, Ireland and Wales confirmed in Paris yesterday that Italy should be invited to participate in the championship from 1999-2000. The Rugby Football Union will make their decision at their next council meeting on 20 February.

ELEVEN PAGES OF SPORT BEGIN ON PAGE 14

IN MONDAY'S 20-PAGE SPORTS SECTION

THE MONDAY INTERVIEW

Chris Sutton talks to Ian Stafford about life back at the top

Chris Hewett watches Jeremy Guscott return to the fray as Bath take on Newcastle

Phil Shaw reports on the draw for the qualifying groups of the European Championship

Saturday 17 January 1998



Lay your bet on a bishop's blessings

Once the province of bored yuppies at their City desks, a bizarre form of gambling is becoming increasingly popular. Spread betting lets you make a mint or lose your shirt, on any subject ranging from share-price movements to the exact minute Ryan Giggs will slot the next one in. *Clifford German* examines the odds.

Betting used to be a simple pleasure. You took a punt on Happy Lad in the 3.15 at Wincanton. If he romped home ahead of the field, you went to collect your winnings. If not, the slip was a further example of the futility and danger of gambling addiction. The "worst" that could happen, however, was that you lost a pre-determined stake, something you decided for yourself when you placed the bet.

That has changed. The latest and certainly the fastest way to lose your shirt is spread betting. The fad started as a way of increasing the range of odds, by gambling on a range of possible results. Unlike conventional gambling, however, the amount you win or lose depends on how close you come to the "spread", a mid-point set by the bookmaker.

The bookmaker chooses the most probable result, sets a small range, or "spread", either side of it, and you bet which way either side of that central spread the result will be. If you think

HOW SPREAD BETTING WORKS

Take, for example, a spread bet on the timing of the first goal in a soccer match. The bookmaker offers a "spread" from the 36th to the 40th minute, in it expects such a goal might be scored.

You think the first goal will come early, so you make a "sell" bet at, say, £10 a minute. If the first goal is scored in the 10th minute you win $(36-10) \times$

£10 = £260. If there are no goals by the 37th minute, however, you are nursing a £10 loss. If there is a late goal you are in trouble, and if the match ends nil-all you are in very deep doo-doo: you have lost £540.

Conversely if you took out a "buy" bet you would make $(90-40) \times £10 = £500$ from a nil-all draw. But a first-minute goal would cost you £390.

the spread is too high you make a "sell" bet, which means you believe the result will come in under the bookmaker's estimate. Conversely, if you believe the spread is too low you make a "buy" bet and hope the bookie has got it wrong the other way round. Then sit back and watch the action.

Roderick Green, a City-based fund manager and fanatical West Ham supporter, knows all about the triumphs and tribulations of spread betting. "Last week, I had a tenuous 'sell' on West Ham scoring the first goal in the first 20 minutes of the Coca-Cola quarter-final with Arsenal," he says. "The Hammers' goal came in at about 17 minutes, so I made about £70 because the bookies had a spread of 25 to 28 minutes for that to happen. Trouble is, Arsenal won 2-1 anyway."

The original spread-bettors were almost without exception young, rich and heavily testosteroneed City types. But

according to Ladbrokes, its spread-betting clients now include artisans and policemen, and even a professional golfer and a weather forecaster. A quarter of earn between £10,000 and £20,000 a year, nearly 60 per cent are between 35 and 54, and half live outside the South-East.

Spread betting was invented in the Sixties by the bookmakers Coral to encourage gambling on movements in the FT 30 share index. It was extended by City professionals who set up the IG Index in 1974, initially to let colleagues bet on the movements in the gold price which had been decontrolled in 1972 and was going up and down rapidly.

The craze has since crossed the species barrier to include sport and politics. IG is the leading expert on political betting. Sports betting is dominated by the Sporting Index which has almost half the market, Ladbrokes and William

Hill, which employ teams of experts to balance the risks by setting spreads and constantly updating them. Angus Loughran, "Statto" in the *Fantasy Football* television programme featuring David Baddiel and Frank Skinner, started life as a Ladbrokes soccer pundit.

Punters can bet on everything from the performance of the favourites at a race meeting to the number and timing of goals, to how many yellow cards will be shown in a game, the sum of the numbers on the shirts of all the goal-scorers, the number of games in a round of the Wimbledon tennis championships, or the number of ducks in a Test series.

Last year's favourite punt, in which millions were wagered – and lost – was on the scale of the future Labour administration's Commons majority. This year, the big event is the World Cup. Sporting Index is offering a spread of 166 to 169 goals for the 64 matches.

Ladbroke's has devised special contracts to limit gains and losses, to reduce risks and attract nervous novices. But for the really committed it also offers "in-running" bets, which allow punters to offset what might be losing bets while the events are actually taking place.

Spread betting is only done over the telephone. Punters must open an account and, after checks, are granted a credit limit.

It is important to realise that, unlike conventional bets, debts from spread betting are legally enforceable and bookies have the right to take defaulters to court to recover debts.

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the tips**

**10 PLACES
RUPERT**
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ED MARY WILSON



**NIC
CICUTTI**

PERSONAL FINANCE JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

Few people would describe me as a war fiend, but if there is one thing I am enjoying at present, it is the open warfare between financial services providers, all competing for their rivals' customers.

Earlier this week, Halifax announced it is to open a 24-hour telephone-based savings account. Premium Savings Direct. The account offers instant access to funds up to twice a year and will pay from 7.3 per cent gross on deposits over £10,000, rising to 7.85 per cent gross on above £40,000. Standard Life, the mutual insurer, launched its high-interest account last week.

Meanwhile, both Scottish Amicable, the formerly mutual insurer taken over last year by Prudential, and First Direct, the telephone-based financial provider, this week launched separate versions of low-cost pension plans.

Without going into detail on the charges, which come in below many of their competitors, what unites them is their willingness to face the fact that people are likely to halt contributions into personal pensions for perfectly sensible reasons.

Consequently, Direct Line and ScotAm are promising not to penalise customers if they halt contributions early. They are saying that if policyholders switch a personal pension to another scheme in the first few years of its life, the "transfer value" paid out will reflect far more closely than before the amount actually paid in.

This is both unremarkable and astonishing. Unremarkable because it has taken so long for many insurers to react to the challenge from their telephone-based rivals, who have followed this strategy for several years. Astonishing, because ScotAm had tried desperately to hold the line against this development.

In fact, it even went so far a few years ago as to try to construct a "Resistance Front" (a secret cartel, actually) against high transfer values—so no avail, as it now turns out.

What we are seeing, both with savings and pensions, is a cold new dawn, as some established players (far too few for now) realise that, to maintain their grip on the market, they will have to deliver competitively priced products. One by-product of this is that the old high street-based branch system will be weakened.

Bank and building society staff will be sacked in their thousands over the next few years. But the reality is that this would have happened anyway, and there's not much we can do about it purely as consumers. What we can do is extract the best possible price out of their war.

On a separate note, Barclaycard has issued an eight point checklist for customers in financial difficulties after the Xmas and January spending spree. Its advice might be a tad more credible had it not also run a huge "Don't Put It Off. Put It On" TV advertising campaign throughout December, coupled with advice to cardholders to skip that month's credit card payment.

High noon on the high street

MONEY MAKEOVER

How to bridge a future gap in income

Name: Colin and Sarah Chadfield
Ages: 43 and 26
Occupations: Fire Brigade officer and Fire Brigade controller

The problem: Colin and Sarah, from North Yorkshire, have a 13-month-old son, George. Colin, who joined the service in 1981, earns about £34,000 while Sarah, who joined in 1992, earns about £17,000.

Both are members of their occupational pension scheme, which provides an inflation-proofed pension based on a multiple of income against their years of service. But although Colin will receive a maximum pension if he stays with the service until retirement, Sarah is contemplating reducing her hours. Another option might be to give up work temporarily to care for George.

They also have some windfall shares from Halifax and Norwich Union and an investment in a Co-op six-year bond, which should pay out any increase in the FTSE 100 index plus 25 per cent at maturity in 2000.

Their greatest concerns are how to provide for George's college education and how to bridge the income gap when Colin stops work but Sarah still has more than 20 years to her own retirement. Another issue is that of protection if either of them dies.

The adviser: Debbie Sotheran, principal at Three Counties Assurance Services, Gothic House, Barker Gate, Nottingham, NG1 1JU, 0115 2230.

The advice: Colin and Sarah both have death-in-service benefit of twice pensionable salary, with more benefits if death is attributable to injury at work.

so at present there is enough life cover to ensure that the main liability, the mortgage, would be repaid.

However, over the longer term this could be affected by many factors, so I would suggest that life cover of £75,000 be taken out on Colin. This would provide additional funds to enable Sarah to continue in employment and support George until he's completed his education. I would also suggest that in Sarah's case life cover of £150,000 is sought, as Colin, George's carer, could be left in a vulnerable position in the event of her death.

As the chance of suffering a serious illness or injury is many times greater than death before retirement, I would recommend that critical illness cover, which pays out on diagnosis of a range of diseases, be incorporated within these arrangements. Scottish Provident offers cover, increasing each year in line with inflation, for £62 per month for Colin and £27 per month for Sarah.

As for saving for the future and George's education, their provision for the young boy at present is a Halifax savings account into which they put his child allowance. I'm under the impression they would like it to work harder but in order to do that I think we need a vehicle with no access before 10 years.

My recommendation is to invest the money in a maximum investment plan (MIP)—set up in joint names. Because there is an element of life cover, should the worst happen, money would still be available to George.

I would suggest using Skandia Life. It allows contributions to be varied from



Colin and Sarah Chadfield with their son George: saving child benefit in a MIP could provide £15,000

year to year without affecting the withdrawal of benefits free from personal tax 10 years after taking out the plan.

Child benefit is paid at £11.05 per week. I would suggest rounding it up to £50 per month, which would, based on a return of 10 per cent, provide a sum of £14,900 when George is 16.

Their investments comprise £12,000 on deposit, premium bonds to the value of £700 each, a Co-op Bond worth £8,000, a single company PEP with Halifax worth some £4,000 and Norwich Union shares of £3,500.

I would suggest they place a larger proportion of their money on deposit. They inform me that they need to keep £6,000 liquid for immediate access. I would suggest shopping around for the

best rates [The Independent publishes "best-buys" each week—see page 6].

As for the six-year bond, it is a joint policy, so would normally be allocated on a 50/50 basis between Colin and Sarah. The profit is only taxable if you are a higher-rate tax payer, therefore I would suggest assigning the policy to Sarah, who is not a higher-rate tax payer. They will need to get the Co-op to prepare a deed of assignment.

As for retirement planning, Colin is one of those rare species who will retire on maximum benefits with a final salary, index-linked pension.

However, to make his pension more tax efficient, I would suggest he takes the lump sum available at retirement and purchase a temporary

immediate annuity. This income is treated partly as return of capital, which is not taxable, so his income should be slightly better than if he took the full pension, all of which is taxable.

Sarah's situation is not so certain. If Sarah were to continue with the Fire Service, especially if she would be working full-time near her retirement age, it would be sensible to purchase added years to boost her pension.

This is not the case, so I would suggest she starts contributing into a PEP straight away, at least for the next two tax years. Unlike a pension, Sarah does not have to be earning to contribute and if she chose to semi retire before her pension kicked in, she could use the PEP to supplement her income.

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT/THE NEILL CLERK TAKE ONE FILM-FINANCE PARTNERSHIP

The product: Take One, a film-financing partnership open to the public, sponsored by Neill Clerk Capital.

The deal: Take advantage of generous tax reliefs on risky film investments by putting in at least £10,000 before the closing date, 20 February. Money is tied up until July 2000 at the earliest.

If, and only if, all goes well, higher-rate taxpayers can hope for returns of 25 per cent a year.

Plus points: Film finance can be spectacularly rewarding, with Polygram estimated to have made more than 30-times its outlay on *The Full Monty*. Risks are horrendous: turkeys such as *Resolution* or *Hudson Hawk*

have seen investors lose almost everything.

Neill Clerk has limited the downside with a combination of tax reliefs and "pre-sales". A higher-rate taxpayer who puts in £6,000 is, in effect, investing around £10,000 because of 40 per cent tax relief. Neill Clerk will only invest in a film if 60 per

cent of it is "pre-bought" (paid for in advance of production) by a TV company seeking to fill its schedules. If the film bombs, it is the Exchequer and the TV company, much more than the investor, that have lost money.

To further reduce risk, "Take One" films can only be TV documentaries.

Drawbacks and risks: Not all of the investment is tax-relievable. So higher-rate taxpayers may not only make nothing, they may also lose money.

The investment is realised only by selling rights to the documentaries. Profits could exceed investment in a short time—but they might not.

If new deals for films dry up, then the money invested may have nowhere to go. It has to be spent by July 2000 or the tax reliefs may disappear.

Verdict: The best way so far to invest in film. Marks out of five: Three and a half. — Andrew Verity

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4/REGULAR SAVING

Prepare for new accounts

Once upon a time, tax-free investments meant PEPs and Tessas, two savings vehicles introduced by the previous Conservative administration. But from April 1999 Labour's brave new plan, the Individual Savings Account, comes into force. Simon Read guides us through its implications.

To anyone planning to make regular savings, the proposed Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) look like offering valuable tax benefits. After they are introduced in April 1999, they will allow you to save up to £5,000 a year in a variety of different ways, including up to £1,000 in a deposit account and up to £1,000 through an insurance company policy - including old-style with-profits endowments which have a element of life cover.

The attraction of ISAs will be that all gains will be free of personal tax liabilities. As such, they will be replacing the existing personal equity plans (PEPs) and tax-exempt special savings accounts (Tessas). Indeed, cash in PEPs and Tessas must be transferred to the new account. PEP holders will have until 5 October 1999 to transfer their savings into an ISA. Those with a Tessa will have to wait until it reaches maturity before they have to transfer the proceeds.

Both PEPs and Tessas have been responsible for encouraging many people to get the regular savings habit. Some financial experts, however, claim that the new ISAs will not be such an attractive proposition. This is largely because of the planned introduction of a new lifetime limit of £50,000 on the accounts.

"The savings habit will not flourish as we enter the 1998 PEP season, unless they realise that a lifetime limit is a disincentive for people to save now," says Marc Sylvain, managing director of Fidelity Investments. "We are urging the Government to reconsider this element of the ISA package. It serves neither the investors' nor the Government's interests."

Don Clark, managing director of Wolverhampton-based IFA Torquil Clark, agrees. "I think the imposition of such an arbitrary limit will have a detrimental effect on savings," he says. "The buy it or lose it mentality which has helped make PEPs a success will disappear. I would like to see the limit abolished altogether or increased to £100,000."

This could happen. The ISA proposals are precisely that - proposals. Interested parties have until the end of January to persuade the Government to change its mind on any aspect of the ISA. This includes the proposed £50,000 life-

time limit. Don Clark, for one, thinks a rethink on this is highly possible. "I feel that the £50,000 limit is far from final at the moment," he says.

You can help change the Government's mind. If you wish to lobby for a higher limit, write to your MP or to Keith Brown at the Inland Revenue, Room 234, Southwest Wing, Bush House, London WC2B 4RD.

Until the exact details of the ISA are finally announced, it will be a little difficult to know how to prepare for the new savings accounts. Do nothing yet, suggests Andrew Barker, operations director of Skipton Financial Services, the independent financial advice arm of the Skipton Building Society. He cautions investors: "The best approach is to wait and see. ISA providers will not be able to publish details of their new accounts for a considerable time, not while the rules that will govern them can still be subject to change."

All PEP holders will get statements of their accounts in April 1999. They will then have until October to switch to a new ISA that their plan manager is likely to be offering them. To make the transfer at the time, they will simply need to return a tear-off slip. Most PEP managers have already committed themselves to making no additional charges for the transfer.

Tessa holders will have until their accounts mature before they have to transfer the cash into an ISA. Wise savers will therefore start a new Tessa between now and April 1999 to get the additional tax allowance. You are allowed to save up to £9,000 over five years in a Tessa. Anyone starting a Tessa before April 1999 will, therefore, have five years of the tax benefits. They will also be able to save up to £5,000 in an ISA for the additional tax-free gains.

"The ISA heralds some improvements over its tax-free predecessors. As well as allowing instant access to your fund, something that you cannot do with Tessas and some of the other tax-free savings schemes without losing the tax advantages, they will also widen the range of qualifying investments to National Savings and life assurance," points out Mr Barker.

"However, these improvements pale into insignificance when compared with the eventual removal of tax credits for dividends and the introduction of a lifetime savings limit of £50,000 for investors."

Despite these shortcomings, ISAs will still offer a savings haven, free from income and capital gains tax, and you might even win one of the 50 monthly prizes of £1,000 to compensate for the disadvantages.

Independent financial adviser Towry Law has produced a free consumer guide to Individual Savings Accounts which is available from Towry Law, Baylis House, Stoke Poges Lane, Slough, Berkshire SL1 3PB, or phone 0345 868244.

How to retire in greater comfort

Saving regularly as part of pension planning is one of the most sensible things any of us can do. There are many ways to do this, but as Tony Lyons warns, the earlier you start, the better.

Relying on the state for a reasonable pension is foolhardy at best. The basic state pension in the future will not go very far and probably won't keep anyone off the poverty line.

When the Government unveils its ideas about the new "stakeholder pension", which will provide a second-tier pension, later this year, it may go some way to filling the gap between being poor and being comfortable in retirement.

But to ensure an adequate income after you retire, you should start saving now.

"Lots of people put off starting a pension plan because they think they have left it too late," says Tony Woods, marketing director of Virgin Direct. "But it's never too late. Obviously, the younger you start the better, but people should start as soon as they can."

If you work for an employer with a company pension scheme, then joining it will usually provide the best means of ensuring a comfortable retirement. Up to 15 per cent of your income can be saved in the scheme and you will receive relief at your top rate of tax on the money you plough in. You may find your company will contribute a reasonable amount, or even guarantee certain benefits to you at retirement, depending on length of service.

If there is no such scheme



Step lively: The earlier you begin paying into a pension the easier it is
Photograph: Geraint Lewis

a basic-rate taxpayer £192.50 and a higher-rate person £150.

Because of the generous tax relief, the rules on contributions are strict. Only earnings up to £84,000 can be taken into account for most people, and the percentage of this that can be invested is determined by your age, as in the table.

Most pensions sold today are equity linked. This means that your savings are invested in stocks and shares. While these go up and down in value, over the long term they have outperformed all other conventional types of investment. While performance of the underlying investments is of the greatest concern, so is the charging structure imposed by the pension plan provider.

In the past, personal pension plans attracted very high charges with significant penalties if payments were changed or stopped. Nowadays, with the rise of providers who sell direct, the charges are more reasonable while the newer plans have become more flexible.

So always look for a company with low charges and

Pension contributions	
Age on 6 April	Maximum % of earnings
Under 35	17.5
36-45	20
46-50	25
51-55	30
56-60	35
61-74	40

flexible rules. Independent financial advisers can help but may charge a fee if you want to compare traditional com-

panies with the newer breed of direct providers.

According to a number of recent surveys which looked at the projected values of various personal pension plans, companies that seem to offer the best returns include Equitable Life, Scottish Widows, Legal & General Direct, Eagle Star Direct and Virgin. The key to the ability of these companies to project higher than average returns "all boils down to our low running costs", says Nigel Webb, senior manager at Equitable Life. "If you have low expenses you can offer savers a good deal. We employ just 400 salespeople, who are paid salaries not commission, and they generate a lot of business."

Anyone taking out a pension plan has to stipulate their retirement date at the outset. The minimum age you can take the proceeds is 50. If you stop working earlier than the date you specified, you could be penalised, although many newer schemes do now allow for this.

You should, therefore, choose a variety of ways of saving. Picking a number of different plans, with different retirement dates, is one solution so long as you stay within the overall contribution limits. You can also use personal equity plans, and individual savings accounts when they become available in 15 months time, as an additional way to invest for retirement.

Whatever you do, make sure you that you regularly invest now so that you will be able to enjoy a comfortable retirement later. Most pension experts recommend that you save at least 10 per cent of your income. The older you are, or the later you start, the higher this should be.

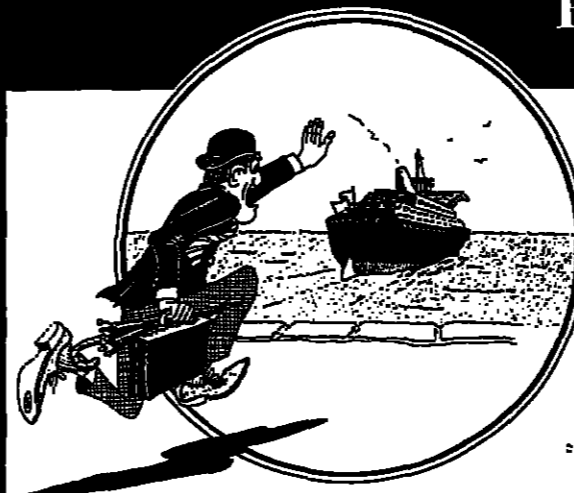
where you work, you are self-employed or you have other earnings, then you could look at personal pension plans. Don't be put off because they can be difficult to understand, have complex rules and have received bad publicity over the past few years because of bad mis-selling in the 1980s.

The earlier you start, the better. To provide £1,000 a year of pension at today's prices at age 60, a 25-year-old man needs to save £35 a month in a personal pension, while a woman would have to contribute £39. For a 30-year-old, the contributions go up to £40 and £45 a month respectively. But if you do nothing about your pension until you are 50, you will have to pay in £101 or £113.

Women pay more because they live longer, so they receive pensions for a longer period. "We find that the biggest barrier to people starting a pension is that they don't believe how generous the tax breaks are," says Mr Woods. "A personal pension is the savings vehicle with the most mind-blowing tax breaks."

This is because you get full tax relief on your premiums. If you are a basic-rate taxpayer, this means £1 of investment for every 77p you pay in. If you pay tax at the higher rate, it will cost you 60p. To put it another way, the Government tops up your contributions so that a £250 investment will only cost

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5/PERSONAL FINANCE

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998
5



THE
JONATHAN DAVIS
COLUMN

The croynism at the heart of Asia's crisis

Despite the steady stream of news reports chronicling the latest events in Japan, Korea and Indonesia, I suspect few people in this country have any clear sense of exactly what is happening, beyond the feeling that crisis is probably an appropriate term for what is taking place.

My crystal ball is certainly no better than anyone else's, but what is clear is that there are two distinct sides to what is happening. One is the developing economic and financial crisis in a number of Asian countries, all of whom trade with each other and therefore are vulnerable to contagion from each other's problems.

At the root of the problem is the apparent indication that the so-called Asian miracle is running out of steam. The rapid growth of the past 20 years is slowing down, with many of the tiger economies which led the way now showing signs of losing their competitive edge. The Japanese economy has been stalled for several years now, with its Government unable to find effective measures to stimulate growth, but what is new is that the second tier of Asian countries, such as Korea and Indonesia, are also now feeling the heat, with their currencies weakening and their industries afflicted by over capacity and rapidly disappearing demand.

This in turn has been compounded by a serious banking crisis of the kind that traditionally follows periods of rapid growth, with many banks and banking institutions which lent freely in the years of fat, finding themselves over exposed. This financial crisis has exposed many of the fault lines in the way that these countries have managed their financial affairs - too much cronyism, too many complex interparty loans, a collapse in collateral values, and so on (not that this is a problem from which western banks have been immune in the past!).

After years of effective state control, the Japanese have finally allowed a leading bank and a large stockbroking firm to go bust, but there are many more financial institutions which are technically insolvent. With

no inflation to erode the value of their bad debts, it seems clear that it is going to take quite a long time for the bad debts and financial problems in many of the leading Asian countries to be worked out of the system.

The second aspect of the crisis is the reaction of the financial markets to this unfolding story of newly apparent economic problems. As always tends to happen in such circumstances, sentiment towards Asia as a focus of investment is rapidly turning sour. The wild exuberance which led many stockbroking firms to carry on peddling the merits of the Tokyo stock market when it was

ago, have also started to take fright at the way the crisis is developing, retreating to "safer" havens.

The stock market statistics tell their own story. Of the 15 largest developed country markets last year, only one went down last year - and that was Japan (which fell 21 per cent and is currently stuck in a trading range around the 14,000-15,000 level).

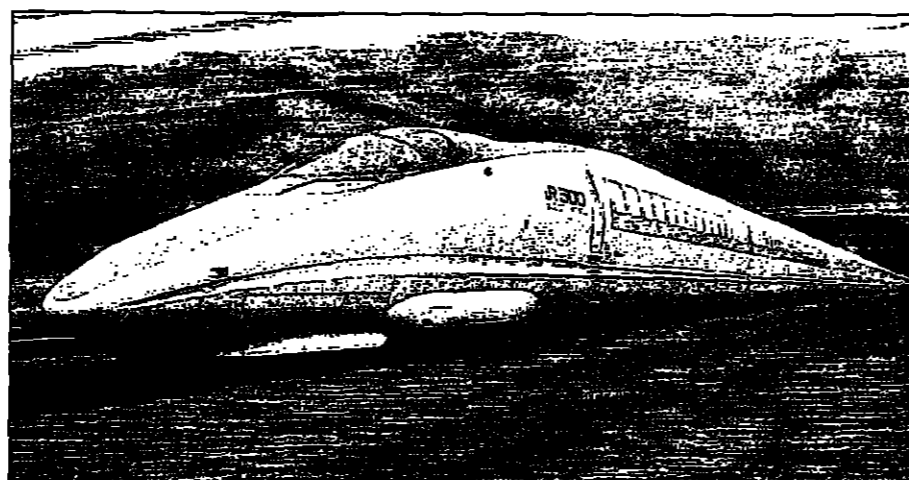
All the other 14 markets rose. Of the 11 leading stock markets in Asia, only three - China, India and Taiwan - rose in local currency terms. Most of the others were down, by anything between 20 per cent and 60 per cent over the year. Not surprisingly,

over seven years (plus 60 per cent), but down 31 per cent over both one and three years. Because of widening discounts, equivalent investment trusts have turned in an even worse performance. As these are average results, some of the individual fund outcomes are inevitably worse still - pity the poor investor who opted to buy a Thailand unit trust three years ago. It has lost nearly 80 per cent of its value over the period.

But what now? There is no question that the crisis, in both economics and sentiment, is a real one. Conventional wisdom now is: avoid the region like the plague. It is too risky. But, of course, for many Asian countries the advice is far too late. The risk has been there from the beginning in many Asian countries: it is the flip side of the above average returns which the region has generated for most of the 1990s. The case for buying individual country funds outside Europe or the United States has always seemed weak to me, given the specific risks involved in many individual emerging markets. Regional funds are not much better, in my view, unless you really think you are capable of distinguishing which region is going to do better than another.

As I said last month, however, the case for putting a modest amount of money into a diversified emerging markets investment trust at a discount of 20 per cent is another matter. Provided you are a genuinely long term investor, the value looks attractive to me. It is, after all, when things are at their gloomiest that the best bargains become available.

It will undoubtedly spill over and affect our own stock markets in due course, though how badly is impossible to say. The other lesson to remember is that just because markets keep going up, it does not mean they cannot be overvalued at the same time. Just look back to what they were saying about how attractive Japanese shares still looked in 1988/89 on a p/e ratio of 60! Even in markets, where hopes are free and plentiful, reality has a nasty habit of catching up in the end.



No longer like the bullet train: Japan's economy has been stalled for several years

absurdly overvalued in the late 1980s is being replaced by unmistakable signs of anxiety in many markets.

Typically, Hong Kong, the most volatile of all the world's leading stock markets, is taking a lead again (was it only a year ago that the market was booming?), but institutional investors in Europe and the United States, who were merrily still buying into both the Asian and emerging markets story a year

virtually all UK unit and investment trusts invested in Asia, either as country or regional funds, have taken a pasting over the past year.

The latest performance statistics paint a sorry picture. In the year to mid-December, for example, the average Japan-only unit trust was down by 28 per cent over one year, 39 per cent over three years and 5 per cent over seven years. The average Far East fund (excluding Japan) is still comfortably ahead

EMU threatens housing boom and bust for Britain

The UK mortgage market may need a big shake-up before Britain is ready to join EMU. Paul Slade reports.

higher the proportion of variable-rate debt, the more the country's housing market will react to interest rate changes.

Mr Meen says the cost of fixed and variable-rate loans at the moment are close enough to need only a small subsidy, and he suggests mortgage interest relief (Miras) should be given only to those with a fixed-rate loan. But some mortgage experts are sceptical. Ian Darby of independent mortgage advisers John Charcol doubts whether Miras alone would provide much of an incentive, particularly as the value of the relief is to drop to 10 per cent on 6 April this year. He says: "If you did have 2 per cent off interest rates, you could buy a five-year fix at about 6 per cent."

Simon Tyler of Chase de Vere Mortgage Management believes the real impact of Britain joining EMU for UK borrowers would be other European lenders entering our market.

He says: "Once we'd been in EMU five years, it will be a more competitive market for borrowers as well. But, right now, we've got probably the most competitive mortgage market we've ever seen in the UK."

Bringing UK interest rates into line with continental ones to qualify for European Monetary Union in 1999 could bring a return to boom-or-bust for the UK housing market, a new report warns.

Geoffrey Meen, of Oxford Economic Forecasting, an independent think-tank, says UK interest rates would have to fall by 2 per cent or 3 per cent to match those elsewhere in Europe. This could lead to renewed volatility for UK house prices, he argues.

Cancelling out the effect of a 2 per cent drop in interest rates on joining EMU would mean an extra 3p in the pound on income tax. His preferred solution is a small subsidy for those taking a fixed-rate loan, to encourage UK borrowers to act more like those on the Continent. About 80 per cent of mortgage debt in the UK is variable rate, against 50 per cent in Italy and just 5 per cent in Germany and France. The

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The fool's approach to investment is not to be jeered at



ROBIN AMLÖT

INTERNET
INVESTOR

After the way the stock market has been behaving recently, plenty of investors, both professional and private, may be feeling a little foolish about some of their investment decisions. However, there is one website which glories in its foolishness - The Motley Fool.

The original Motley Fool site was first established in the US in 1993, which makes it positively ancient by web standards. In an interview on the business television channel CNBC, one of the Fool's founders, Tom Gardner, commented: "It's your time horizon, really. We concern ourselves with 15 and 20-year returns. And the market has often focused just on the next 15 to 20 minutes."

The Motley Fool name comes directly from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Jacques

says in Act II, scene VII: "A fool, a fool, I see a fool in the forest, a motley fool", going on to say "I am ambitious for a motley coat" and "Motley's the only wear".

Motley was the parti-coloured garment worn by Elizabethan court jesters.

The jester, as well as being a sort of medieval stand-up comedian and clown rolled into one, was also the only chap who could get away with telling home truths to the monarch without having his head removed from his shoulders.

The Motley Fool's stated aims are to educate, amuse, and enrich the individual investor. "to prove to you that the best person to manage your money is YOU on the grounds that no one will have your financial well-being as close to their heart as you do yourself".

The site looks to demonstrate that the key to investment success is doing one's homework and that such "homework" can be fun.

The website is dedicated to creating wealth by investing in shares and only shares: not options, not futures, not commodities. The Fool is not even particularly fond of unit trusts and other mutual funds, given the costs of poorly performing fund managers.

Unusually, the Motley Fool is "foolish enough" to put its money where its mouth is. In addition to all the information and instruction the site carries, it also runs three real-money model portfolios: the Fool Portfolio; the Boring Portfolio; and the Drip Portfolio.

These demonstrate methods of portfolio management and are the closest the site actually

comes to giving stock "tips". However, to ensure that it is not laid open to charges of price manipulation, any changes to the portfolios are announced in advance of trade.

On the web, the Motley Fool is targeted at a US audience. However, it also offers a service designed for UK investors. Fool UK is part of the services offered by AOL UK.

It does not tout specific investment products. The website makes its money from carrying advertising, usage charges paid by AOL, and selling books and a variety of other products in the Foolshop online.

Fool UK includes share prices, a guide to "Beat the Footsie", what it claims is an idiot-proof 10-step guide to investing in the UK market and daily market news.

In addition to this site content, Fool UK offers message boards where AOL members can share their own investment ideas.

If you already have web access you can see the US Motley Fool site but you will not be able to view Fool UK unless you are a member of AOL.

AOL, which used to call itself America Online but now prefers the acronym, claims to be the largest internet service provider in the world, with 10 million members, including more than 250,000 in the UK. If you are not an AOL member, you can download AOL software and take out trial membership from the AOL website.

The Motley Fool website:
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6/PERSONAL FINANCE

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Everyone likes the idea of saving money. It's where to start that is the problem. Which savings schemes to choose from, assessing the risk and volatility of various equity-linked products - it's enough to make you want to spend all your money instead.

A new guide by Steve Lodge, personal finance editor on the Independent on Sunday, can help you make those difficult decisions. It takes savers through the many options available. It also briefly discusses retirement planning. The guide, sponsored by Wesleyan Financial Services, the mutual insurance company, is available free by calling 0800 1879749. Or fill in the coupon above.

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BRIAN TORA



A little panic would not hurt

It is becoming rather difficult to ignore the Far East. The roller-coaster ride in Hong Kong and other markets may seem of little consequence in the Square Mile, but we may yet find the Asian contagion is not confined to the Pacific Rim.

The UK investment community has had a long-standing love affair with the Far East and the arguments have been all too familiar: large populations with aspirations and a strong work ethic; high savings rates; commercial flare. The trouble is that even though all these factors are present they no longer work.

So where did it all go wrong? Dr Mahathir Mohammed, Malaysia's Prime Minister, recently extolled the virtues of his country. He likened the strong growth achieved to a river in flood. The rocks beneath the surface were concealed by the floodwater. In this case the rocks appear to have been profligate lending, skill shortages and poor management. The speed at which Far East growth hit the buffers was quite alarming. And yet, this time last year, no one was expecting it.

Worries over the likely knock-on effects have been enough to generate a little introspection in the US market. Prices there have retrenched by some 10 per cent, but there is still little sign of panic in Wall Street. Indeed, the reaction in North America and Europe seems more like indifference. But does the end of a period of high growth really matter? Much depends upon what happens next. That world

growth will be affected is undoubted. There is now much less money around the Pacific Rim and demand for manufactured goods must decline. Many countries must be hoping that they can export their way out of trouble. Indeed, given the devaluations, we can expect cheap Asian goods on offer here before long. That does not augur well for some industries, both in Europe and America.

Interestingly, it is the pace of growth in South-east Asia that helped create the problem. In some areas, skill shortages drove up wages and reduced competitiveness. One of the aspects of these recent developments has been to highlight the over-capacity in many areas of manufacturing production. Improved techniques, better inventory management and the continuing forward march of information technology have brought great changes. Still, if you can't afford to spend the money, the choice is between stockpiling goods and closing whole production lines down. The latter seems inevitable. The worry must be that social unrest could follow.

The message so far for the developed world has been, don't panic but a little bit of panic may now be appropriate. And we all need to keep our fingers crossed that things on the other side of the world do not get too much worse before they get better.

Brian Tora is chairman of the investment strategy committee at Greig Middleton, stock-brokers.

BEST BORROWING RATES

	Telephone	% Rate and period	Max amt %	Fee	Incentive
MORTGAGES					
FIXED RATE					
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0500 225777	1.05% to 1.45%	50p	£250	Free interest rate
West Bromwich BS	01222 625 7070	3.75% to 5.10%	75p	£250	£300 cash rebate
Northern Rock	0945 645 0500	6.25% to 12.25%	0%	£500	
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES					
Scottham BS	0800 133138	2.25% to 3.25%	0%	£250	
Principality BS	01222 344188	5.00% to 13.00%	0%	—	
Bradford & Bingley BS	0800 535000	7.00% to 9.50%	0%	£250	£250 cash rebate
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES					
Hagley Economic BS	01782 200283	4.50% to 12.00%	0%	£250	
First Mortgage	0800 080088	5.00% to 12.01%	0%	£250	—
Scottham BS	0800 133138	5.00% to 9.50%	0%	£250	
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES					
Universe BS	0800 281405	2.65% to 1.25%	0%	£250	
First Mortgage	0800 080088	5.50% to 11.01%	0%	£250	—
Northern BS	0800 330210	9.00% to 5.50%	0%	£250	£250 cash rebate
UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS					
	Telephone	APR %	Max LTV	Fixed monthly payments (£250 over 3 yrs)	
UNSECURED					
				With insurance	Without insurance
Northern Rock	0245 421421	12.9% H		£163.12	£163.12
Direct Line	0181 680 9966	12.9% A		£163.75	£163.75
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 121125	12.9%		£164.16	£164.16
SECURED (SECOND CHARGE)					
			Max LTV Adv.	Term	
Capital One Bank	0800 240024	9.7%	Max	£206 to £10K	£206 to £10K
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 121121	10.7%	70%	£22.5K to £100K	3 years to maturity
First Direct	0345 100105	11.2%	80%	£20K to £100K	3 years to maturity
OVERDRAFTS					
			Authorized	Unauthorized	
			% per APR	% per APR	
Alfred & Leicester	0500 339555	ALLIANCE	11.75% A	11.75% A	£250
Bank of Scotland	0500 804904	Direct Charge	11.0%		26.5%
Northern BS	0800 330210	Revolving	9.9% to 12.2%	£250	£250
CREDIT CARDS					
	Telephone	Card Type	Min Income	Rate %	APR %
STANDARD					
Capital One Bank	0800 800000	Visa	£1000	0.55% H	6.90% H
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	£1000	0.54% H	7.90% H
Robert Fleming	0800 829100	Base Rate Linked	£1000	1.00% H	13.00% H
GOLD CARDS					
Capital One Bank	0800 800000	Visa	£20K	0.55% H	6.90% H
Co-operative Bank	0245 212212	Base Rate Visa	£20K	0.60% H	11.90% H
RBS Advanta	0800 077770	Visa	£20K	0.54% H	7.90% H
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	Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods		
		% PM	APR	% PM	APR
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Mark & Spencer	01244 661681	1.50%	25.0%	2.00%	27.0%
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Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Card Cash	Instant	5.00%	Year
Leeds & Holbeck	0500 225777	Premium Access	Instant	6.00%	Year
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS					
CBS	0800 742427	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
Alfred & Leicester	0545 606 9800	First Class Instant	Postal	5.00%	Year
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS					
Northern BS	0800 111200	60 Day	60 Day (P)	5.00%	Year
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
Investor Bank (UK)	0171 253 1650	Base Plus	1 Year	5.00%	Year
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS					
Investor Bank (UK)	0171 253 1650	HCA 5000	Instant	5.00%	Year
Cheltenham	0500 429429	Classic Postal	Instant	5.00%	Year
FIXED RATE BONDS					
Wolverhampton	0171 657 6150	Fixed Rate Bond	1 Year	5.00%	Year
Coventry BS	0545 686222	Fixed Rate Bond	5.00%	5.00%	Year
FIRST TESSAS					
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
Investor Bank (UK)	0171 253 1650	Premium with Transfer	5 Year	5.00%	Year
FOLLOW-ON TESSAS					
Investor Bank (UK)	0171 253 1650	Base Plus	5 Year	5.00%	Year
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)					
ITV London & Eps	01803 800020	2 Year	5.00%	5.00%	Year
ITV London & Eps	01803 800020	4 Year	5.00%	5.00%	Year
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)					
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (GROSS)					
Investor Bank (UK)	0171 253 1650	Base Plus	5 Year	5.00%	Year
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year
Wolverhampton	0800 222200	Instant Transfer	Instant (R)	5.00%	Year

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RBS Advanta is launching a new Platinum credit card charging 7.9 per cent until January 1999, reverting thereafter to the standard rate, currently 17.9 per cent. The card carries other benefits, including lost

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Jupiter is launching a new Global Opportunities unit investing in small and mid-cap shares world-wide. The fund, which is PEPable, will allocate 35 per cent of funds in the UK and 20 per cent in Europe, with

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Credit Suisse Asset Management is offering a 2 per cent discount on lump sum PEP investments into a wide range of its funds. The normal initial

charge is 5.25 per cent. Call 0171-436 2929.

Triodos, the ethical investment bank, is increasing rates paid on its Top Tessa account to 7.5 per cent. Call 0117 9739339.

Wesleyan Financial Services, the mutually-owned insurer, is extending its guar-

antee to its Homebuyer endowment policyholders that a policy maturing before 1 January 2005 will repay the original loan. Call 0345 310310.

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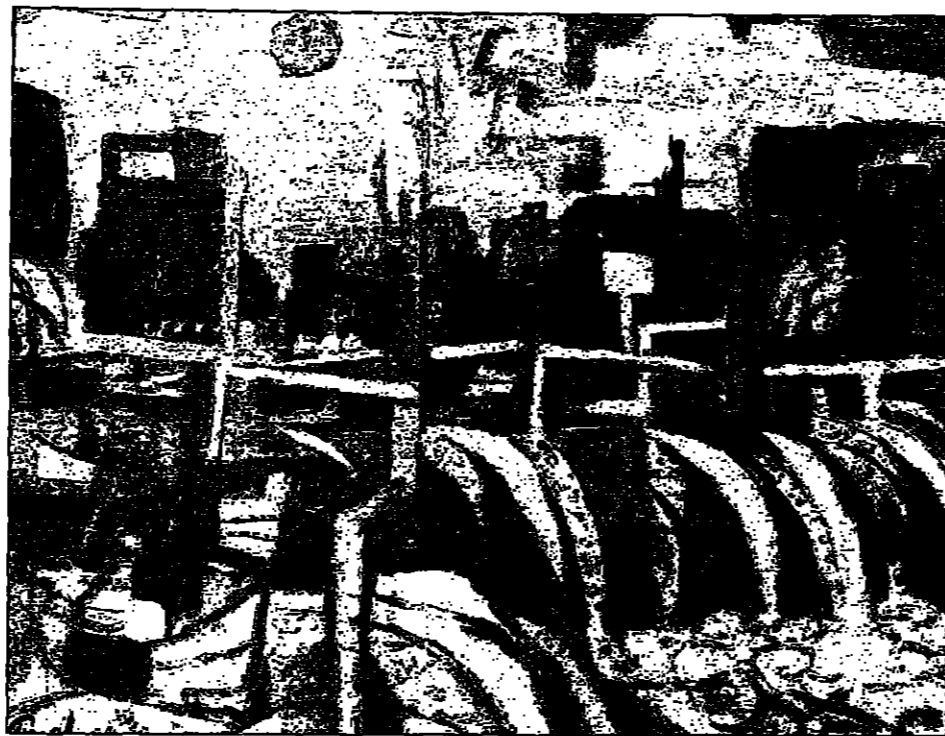
7/PERSONAL FINANCE

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998

COLLECT TO INVEST

A new dawn for Modern Brit Art?

Private buyers are piling into the Modern British paintings market, which, in November sales, showed signs of blowing its top. John Windsor examines whether a peak has been reached.



London calling: 'The Weir' by Julian Trevelyan fetched £7,130 in November

Some auctioneers are trumpeting a top-down revival of the market, which crashed spectacularly in 1991-92, leaving some speculators with paintings worth a third of what they had paid and Cork Street festooned with To Let signs.

The first auction since November's headline prices is at Phillips on Tuesday (11am) with estimates mostly under £1,000. Its target audience - new buyers with modest means - may well be confused: gong-banging for new Lowry and Spencer price records has become an annual event since the crash, while the market as a whole has been hauling itself up by its bootstraps. The leading dealer Leslie Waddington warns: "It's a gradual recovery, not complete - not a bad market, but not yet a strong one."

There is not much action in the £100,000-£200,000 range but the market under £20,000 is worth a look.

First point to note is that with dealers still strapped for cash and being outbid by private buyers (Sotheby's estimates 85 per cent of its buyers are private and Christie's estimates 70 per cent, a reverse of the pre-crash situation), market-making in specific names by dealers is only just beginning again. Susannah Pollen of Sotheby's reports that, whereas previously she could predict which lots would be carried off by which dealers, nowadays the bids are a product of "a hundred different whims" of private buyers. This makes it difficult for investors to spot price trends to follow.

These days, whenever a dealer is seen buying up a name, the private buyer com-

petition tends to pile in. For example, London dealer David Messum recently began bidding for the idiosyncratic figurative paintings of Julian Trevelyan RA (1910-1988), who exhibited at the first International Surrealist exhibition in London in 1936, was associated with the London Group, and whose work will have a touring retrospective curated by Nicholas Usherwood, beginning in October at the RCA, where Trevelyan taught Hockney print making.

Messum paid only £2,530 for Trevelyan's *Crean Spring* landscape, estimated £2,500-£3,500 at Christie's South Kensington in September. But two months later, private bidders at Christie's King Street saleroom forced him up to £7,130 for Trevelyan's *The Weir*, which carried the same estimate.

Pre-recession, the dealers were the market-makers. They lent stability, knowing that they had to supply clients at reasonable prices while earning a margin for themselves. These days, outbid and empty-handed, they smart under the auctioneer's hollow, "thank you for your support" on their way out.

The consolation is that the new private buyers are, for the most part, not speculators likely to bust the market by dumping at the first tremors of a wobble in prices. Their taste is towards adventurous figuratives rather than the Impressionist style.

One dealer whose buying is worth watching is Spink-Leger, a marriage of two galleries injected with new money

last September by its owners, Christie's. They have been bidding aggressively for British watercolours and Modern Brits and will be holding a selling exhibition of 20th century British artists in April.

Among them will be Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, killed in the first World War. Ten of his pencil and pen-and-ink drawings of animals, birds and people are in Phillips' sale next week, estimated at under £1,000. Spink-Leger will also be showing Sickert, William and Ben Nicholson, Innes, Yeats, Burra, Pasmore, Spencer, Spear, Tunard and Vaughan.

If you think it demeaning to follow dealers, swoon on your art history and go for lesser-known members of the Mod Brit "schools" - Newlyn, Slade, Camden Town, Euston Road, Bloomsbury, St Ives, Neo-Romantic and London.

Underpriced but talented names can rise suddenly as bidders collectively realise that their low prices are unsustainable. The colourful, semi-abstract stills of Mary Fedden (born 1915) fell at auction by 50-60 per cent from their peak of 1988-90. They could be had for £2,000-£4,000 until last October.

Now they fetch £3,000-£8,500 and are still rising. Similar recognition may be descending upon another RA, Frederick Gore (b 1913), whose work is rare at auction. Somebody got a bargain when they bought his *Spring Landscape*, *Clement's Reach*, *Moopham*, full of vibrant blue and pink furrows, for £2,990 in Christie's November sale.

The ever-popular but much-debated

sunlit nudes of Ken Russell RA, which have reached Fedden's prices and are firming up still further, sell best if they are recent. People seem to want to know what the indefatigable 65-year old is getting up to. Keith Vaughan's prices are firming up, too, but the buying power for his is homosexual.

Do your own research on price trends - individual auction results can be misleading. For example, three blocky paintings by William Scott RA (1913-1989), who has benefited from a critical re-assessment, failed to sell in Sotheby's November sale. The art trade press reported that the market for him seemed to be running out of steam. In fact, the best Scotts are fetching around £40,000, double 1989 values. Sotheby's estimates of up to £60,000-£80,000 were over-egged.

If you are after a managed investment in Mod Brits, find a reliable dealer in charge of selling a deceased artist's estate, whose income depends upon maximising prices. David Messum is selling the Impressionistic, Braque-like landscapes and still lifes of the Suffolk artist Peggy Somerville (1918-1975) at judicious intervals. Her work is catalogued in a book, *Peggy Somerville: An English Impressionist*, by Stephen Reiss, £25, published by the Antique Collectors' Club. Prices: from £500 for drawings and pastels, oils around £2,500.

Phillips (0171-629 6602); David Messum (0171-437 5545)

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET

Why it's worth becoming familiar with Footsie

"The top 100 shares quoted on the London stock market, whose changes in price are measured constantly to see how the market generally is moving," is the neat way that Gill Nott, the chief executive of ProShare, describes the Financial Times/Stock Exchange 100 index. The FTSE 100 is mentioned in most news bulletins and its progress is always featured whenever there is a crisis on one of the world's stock exchanges.

Affectionately known as the Footsie, it may be viewed as one of the market's barometers. It can be used as a yardstick against which to measure the performance of individual shares or a portfolio. It was launched on 3 January 1984 with a base of 1,000. When it broke through the 5,000 level on 6 August 1997, it meant the shares it represents had risen by a multiple of five in 13 years and 215 days.

One of the main reasons for the birth of the Footsie was Chicago's then newly established Traded Options and Financial Futures market. So that London could match the services provided in Chicago, the City wanted a constantly up-dated index so that products could be developed to allow investors to hedge, or take a view on future market trends, with a single transaction.

Before the introduction of the Footsie there were only two stock market indices. The FT Ordinary Share Index, established in 1935, only comprises 30 constituents and was considered unrepresentative of the market generally. Also, it is an unweighted geometric index which, while curbing the effect of dramatic price movements, has a bias to downward turns over time. Furthermore it was only calculated each hour.

A completely fresh start was called for. An index with 100 constituents was chosen be-

cause more than this number would not have resulted in speedy calculations, while less would not be an accurate way of measuring the market's performance. The companies are selected by their market capitalisation, which is simply the total number of shares they have issued multiplied by their price in the market. The Footsie is therefore an index of Britain's 100 largest companies.

Those selected account for just over 70 per cent of the total market value of UK shares. However, for various reasons, some companies are excluded. This may be because the company is considered to be resident overseas for tax purposes, or it is a subsidiary of a company already in the index or because it has a large, static shareholding.

Technically, the Footsie is a weighted arithmetic index, which means that a change in price is weighted by the issued share capital of the company. Consequently, a 10 per cent movement in the shares of the smallest company in the index has less "weight" than a 10 per cent movement in the price of shares of the company which has the largest market capitalisation.

Naturally, values of companies are changing constantly. Nevertheless, alterations to the constituent list of members of the Footsie are kept to a minimum. Normally a company will only be removed if it has fallen below 110 in its market value ranking. None the less, by the time the index celebrated its 10th birthday, 42 companies had been removed from the original list. Of these, 23 had failed to keep pace with the market and shrank in comparison with their peers; 17 were taken over or merged, while Ferranti and British & Commonwealth had failed.

The first change took place on 19 January 1984 when J

Rothschild replaced Eagle Star. Usually changes are made each quarter following the meaning of the FTSE Actuaries UK Indices Committee.

On 10 December this year, the Committee approved the inclusion of Mercury Asset Management (MAM), British Energy and Amvescap, RMC Group, Blue Circle Industries and TI Group were excluded. The changes became effective on 22 December.

However, on 23 December Merrill Lynch's bid for MAM became unconditional. As a result, the Committee's rules concerning takeovers came into play and Blue Circle, excluded just 24-hours previously, was reinstated.

The same rules were used

When the FTSE 100 passed 5,000 last August it meant shares had risen five-fold in 13 years

on 16 December following the merger of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan to create Diageo. On that occasion, Nycomed Amersham was admitted to the index. To ensure that natural occurrences, such as mergers and takeovers, are dealt with efficiently, the Committee has a reserve list of companies on which they may draw.

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GAVIN GREEN

To be, or not to be (green, that is). The recent Detroit Show highlighted this schizophrenia among US car manufacturers. Just a month after helping to bankroll ad campaigns urging Americans to reject a Kyoto greenhouse gas treaty, US car-makers devoted many press conferences to promoting environmental issues. One moment they'd promise to have a hydrogen fuel cell car ready for production by 2004. The next they'd unveil the latest V8-powered pick-up truck that'd be lucky to do 15mpg.

Along with some Japanese and European makers, the US is developing hydrogen fuel cells that promise no tailpipe pollution at all (and no carbon dioxide). They seem to be making progress - though so far none of the car companies has made it clear how the hydrogen itself can be produced in a green way - eg by solar power. If introducing fuel cells simply means existing power stations working harder, pollution from the primary source will increase - and power stations produce more pollution than cars, anyway.

The car manufacturers' need to innovate conflicts with their need to keep current customers happy. No matter how censorious we Europeans get, Yanks want their cheap gasoline. They argue that inexpensive energy is one of the keys to the most successful economy on Earth. They also like driving around in pick-ups and 4x4s, and sedans with bonnets big enough to land aeroplanes on.

Sales of "light trucks" (Yankspeak for big 4x4s, pick-ups and MPVs), the most gas-guzzling sector of the market, are booming in the US. The biggest selling vehicle by a mile is the Ford F-series pick-up, and the biggest single growth area is in big off-rovers. And by big, I mean big. The Range Rover, mammoth of the motorways here, is a motoring minnow in the US 4x4 market.

So as long as the Americans want trucks (and by 2000, analysts reckon, light trucks will make up more than half the total vehicle market), the US makers will give them trucks. The Japanese, equally customer focused, are also jumping on to the truck gravy train. Lexus, in Europe a byword for tasteful discretion and efficient engineering, launched a new 4x4 in Detroit that was almost as big and thirsty as the local gluttons.

Meanwhile, to save their consciences and those of the American people and their government (Bill Clinton even went on national TV to congratulate them), US car manufacturers are making bold noises about exciting new green technology. Nonetheless, despite the PR puff, it is highly unlikely that we'll see any of these high-tech, potentially eco-friendly solutions in volume production for many years. The "production ready by 2004" boasts for hydrogen fuel cells may be true. But unless there is a huge change in American public opinion, and taxation, these cars cannot possibly hope to compete with gasoline cars on price or popularity. They will be no more than minority vehicles, run by state utilities and car company-backed bodies - useful test-beds for the day, a few decades in the future, when new technology will either be cheaper (as oil prices rise), essential (as oil runs out) or mandated by government.

Either way, the car industry is preparing itself for change. It doesn't expect it to happen quickly, and it's confident that there's life left in the old petrol internal combustion engine (rather more than many Detroit press conferences suggested, in fact). But in the meantime, hydrogen fuel cells and other new-tech powertrains keep the journalists busy and make the car companies look good.

One day, though, they'll have to deliver. And that's when the US car makers, still the world's biggest, will show their true colours.

On your marques: invest some shoe-leather in the used-car lots this January and you could drive away in a BMW 7-series
Photograph: Peter Macdonald



More metal for your money

The used car trade has got the January blues, and if you can afford to, now is the time to take advantage of those poor lonely blighters shivering on the forecourt. James Ruppert shows you how.

The car trade is highly seasonal. From the buoyant early spring it goes through to a strong summer and a gentle running down as autumn turns into winter. Then, come November, things get a little bit chilly. On the run-up to Christmas spare cash is being diverted to other spending. Not only that, but kicking tyres on a sub-zero forecourt is hardly a popular pastime.

Can't used buyers with about £3,000 to £5,000 to spend know that this is the time to go shopping. Welcome to the January used-car sales.

Superminis: If any type of car is going to defy the seasonal downturn, it will be the smaller hatchback which is perennially in demand. Everyone wants an economical, practical and reliable small car. One

car which surprisingly fits the bill is the Fiat Punto. It's a thoroughly modern supermini which has led the company's Nineties renaissance. The Punto is well built and cheap to buy and run. Prices start at £3,000 for a high-mileage. 1994, three-door 55S. Hatchbacks: The second group of cars least likely to be on special offer will be in the so-called Golf class. Once again, practical and reliable cars never go out of fashion. VW Golfs aren't that cheap. Even the arrival of the all-new Golf means that only a high mileage and underpowered 1992 1.4 would be with-in budget. However, a Seat Ibiza 1.4 is effectively a rebodied but lighter and perkier version, built to VW standards. You can even afford a 1995 model.

Off-rovers: In theory 4x4 vehicles should be by far the strongest sector at this time of the year. Snow, ice and torrential rain are ideal conditions to show off. That was a few years ago, when they were fashionable. Sluggish performance, poor mpg and top-heavy handling has put them out of fashion. The only reason to buy a 4x4 is for work. Try a handy-sized 1993 Daihatsu Fourtrak, or, if you want loads of room, then a Nissan Patrol is cum-

bersome, but brilliant value at less than £5,000.

People carriers: The Espace was the first and arguably best of the breed, in 1984. An early one would still cost £3,000; £5,000 puts a 1988 model within reach. Trouble is, they're not always in perfect nick. Toyota took the van-with-windows concept and applied it to its reliable and capacious eight-seat Space Cruiser; £5,000 buys a well-cared-for '90 model.

Executive cars: Any time of the year is a bad time for big cars. Middle-management drivers traditionally opt for Ford Granadas and Vauxhall Cavaliers, but there is a classier alternative. The Saab 900 has all the luxury trimmings. The absence of a BMW or Mercedes badge makes all the difference: high-mileage examples can be bought at give-away prices right now: 1992 2.0 CD saloon models with automatic transmission, air conditioning and an unfeasibly big boot, cost an easy £5,000.

Luxury cars: These depreciate heavily, even with a BMW badge on the bonnet. While 3 and 5 series seem to defy gravity, £50,000 spanking new 7 series tumble to used-car reality at an alarming rate. Of course, lots of expensive things could potentially

go wrong, but one that has been maintained regardless of cost by a plutocrat should not let you down. Try a 1990 735i for size.

Family cars: The size of the fleet-car sector means that it is sensitive to oversupply all year round, and even more likely to yield bargains at this time of the year. Best medium-sized hatch and saloon of the Nineties has been the Ford Mondeo, and they make great used buys, cheap to run and nice to drive. Cheapest is a '93 1.6, nicest a '95 2.0.

Sports coupés: Not the time of year to go looking for a frivolous sports car. So a good time to find a Nissan 200SX. Naff badge, but it looks the sports car part. Has good 2+2 accommodation, is very quick and utterly reliable because it is built by the same company that makes Micras. Underated, fun, and a 1990 model is yours for less than £5,000.

So when you go shopping this January, bear in mind that dealers are eager to do deals during their bleakest months. Also, any private advertiser is going to be pretty desperate to sell. Get a price guide such as *Furber's* from the newsagent and haggle around the trade (not retail) valuation.

It's not a lumberjack, but you won't care

You should be able to get tartan and denim trim in a car called Forester, and a lifestyle option pack with axes and a chain-saw - but you can't. Subaru has missed a trick there, then. Frivolous? Not at all, says John Simister.

The Subaru is about nothing if not niche marketing, and niche marketing is a serious business. Exploit new trends, create demand where none existed, that's the idea.

Fat 4x4s of the Discovery and Shogun genre are variously practical workhorses, social status statements, or objects of derision, depending on your standpoint. This last view has taken a hold recently, because there are few sights drier than that of a gas-guzzling, bull-barred, fat-tyred Tonka toy parked half on the pavement outside the school gates. The clever thing to do, if you want to combine a 4x4's usefulness with social sensibility, is to find one which is a little lower, less visually aggressive and less needlessly profigate with the Earth's natural resources. In short, you want an estate car and a 4x4 in one. And that's the new niche.

You've probably read about the Land Rover Freelander - seen the ads, had the mailshots. It's the highest profile of the "soft-rovers", and the best

suited to all-terrain travel. But there are others: Toyota's RAV4 defined the breed, Honda's CRV enlarged it and the Forester, launched just before the Freelander, refined it.

Of them all, the Forester is the only one to have meaningful four-wheel drive happening all the time. The others only divert power to their rear wheels when the fronts are slithering. In practice it makes little difference one way or the other, because automatic all-wheel drive is always there when you need it, but it does give the Subaru an uncannily secure feeling when you're going quickly on a wet road.

Here is the Subaru's great strength. Relatively low in build, half-way in height between a full-size off-roader and an ordinary estate car, and with a low centre of gravity thanks partly to its unusual flat-four engine, the Forester is an entertaining drive. It corners quickly, steers accurately and rides well, calling for none of the relearning of motion physics that you need for a 4x4 of the tall and lumpy variety. Part of the prowess comes from the fact that under its lofty build, the Forester has broadly the same underpinnings as the Impreza Turbo, which is one of the most road-adhesive cars known to the world today.

True, the Forester goes squiddy in a bend long before the hot Impreza, as you might expect, but then it's also able to tackle fields and farmtracks, provided they're not too lumpy. A Freelander can venture further into the wilds, long after



SUBARU FORESTER

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Price: £16,400. Engine: 1,994cc, four cylinders in horizontally opposed pairs. 16 valves. 122bhp at 5,600 rpm. Five-speed gearbox, four-wheel drive. Top speed 111mph. 0-60 in 10.3sec, 26-31mpg.

Rivals

Honda CRV LS: £17,020. Noisy, otherwise average in every way. Options include a portable shower.
Land Rover Freelander Station Wagon: £17,995. Expensive next to Forester, but chunkier looks, better off-road ability, competitive on-road prowess.
Toyota RAV4 GX 5-door: £17,463. Not particularly tough, but light weight gives lively if buzzy performance. Looks cute, feels cheaply made.

the Forester has pulped its underpinnings, but for the uses to which most will put an off-roader, the Forester should do just fine.

It's lively, too, the uneven and lazy beat of its flat-four disguising the fact that there's 122bhp on tap and vigorous acceleration provided you're prepared to work the engine hard. There's even an extra set of low-speed gear ratios, just as in a proper 4x4. It's frustratingly easy to operate the low-range selector lever instead of the hand brake, though, because they are right next to each other.

You step up into a Forester, but only slightly, and the driving position is normal and car-like apart from the extra space above your head. But not many cars give you an extra power socket in the back, and a plastic recess which is intended to double as a washing-up bowl. This is one of a claimed 20 storage areas - I confess I didn't count them all - which include a fishing-rod compartment (but not an axe-holder). Unlike many 4x4s, the Forester has its spare wheel stored conventionally inside, so it can have a conventional, lift-up tailgate. This is easier to live with than the over-engineered contraptions found elsewhere.

The Forester brings together the best aspects of an estate car and a 4x4. It's cheap, too, relatively speaking. It's not beauty - it looks a bit dated and square-cut, in fact - but neither is it kitsch. If they thought about it, a lot of people could need one quite badly.

CLASSIFIED

Legal Notices

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
I, Howard Charles Little of 39 Houghton Lane, Swanton, Manchester M27 0DZ, having for the last six months or more carried on the trade of a motor vehicle dealer, hereby give notice that I intend to apply to the Licensing Justices for the City of Manchester sitting at the Central Annual Licensing Meeting to be held at the Magistrates' Court, Crown Square, Manchester M60 1PR on Thursday the 5th day of February 1998 at 10.30 am for the grant of a Special Hours Certificate under Section 77 of the Licensing Act 1964 in respect of those premises situated at 33-35 Rochdale Street, Manchester M2 1JL and known as "The Rochdale House".
AND FURTHER TAKE NOTICE that if such said Certificate is granted as aforesaid Section 76 of the said Act shall apply to the said premises from the day of the date of the grant of such said Certificate on Thursdays and Saturdays both days inclusive of each and every week with a terminal hour of 1.00 am.
ANY person intending to oppose the application for the grant of a Special Hours Certificate in respect of those premises shall give notice in writing of his intention to the applicant and to the Clerk to the Licensing Justices specifying in general terms the grounds of the opposition not later than seven days before the commencement of the aforesaid Central Annual Licensing Meeting.
Dated the 13th day of January 1998
HALLIWELL LANDAU,
St James's Court, Brown Street, Manchester M2 2PL, Solicitors and Authorised Agents for the Applicant.

The Insolvency Act 1986
OXFORD SPEEDWAY PROMOTIONS LIMITED
Notice is hereby given, pursuant to Section 56 of the Insolvency Act 1986, that a Meeting of the Creditors of the above named Company will be held at Third Floor, 311 Balliol Lane, Fenchurch, London E12 8JY on Thursday the 26th day of January 1998 at 12.00 noon, for the purpose mentioned in sections 99 to 101 of the said Act. A list of the names and addresses of the creditors of the Company will be available for inspection on the two business days prior to the above meeting, between the hours of 10.00 am and 4.00 pm at BSC (Business Secretaries), Third Floor, 311 Balliol Lane, London, E12 8JY.
Dated the 16th day of January 1998
Lee David Parfitt, Director

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MY WORST CAR - RUSSELL GRANT'S MG 1300

I called my first car Jupiter, which is the planet of travel. It was a Ford Anglia, and it took me all over the country without ever letting me down, which is more than can be said for my second, and worst, car - a horrible MG 1300.

Poor old Jupiter's floor rusted through, and I had to buy a replacement. The MG was certainly attractive, with its Bermuda yellow paintwork and black vinyl roof. That's why I called it Venus - it was pretty - but the moral was that appearances can be highly deceptive.

Persuading the MG to start was a constant trial. Instead of a reassuring whirr before the engine itself would engage, all I would ever hear was a dull thud, then nothing. The battery was always dead, and hardly a day went by when the car didn't cause me some sort of grief.

When it conked out one day on the Hammondsmith flyover, that was the final straw. I had to get out and push. I made it off the flyover, stopped outside a pub and I went in for a couple of stiff brandies. I never drove the MG again; I phoned my local garage and said, "get rid of it".

After that experience I have always tried to pay some at-



'Venus' appearances can be deceptive

tention to the car's astrological chart. Provided you can find out when a thing was made, you can chart absolutely anything.

I remember buying one of the first Austin Maestros, the talking ones, which had a female voice to give you various stern warnings. I found that it was badly aspected. Its relationship to Uranus wasn't very good, and that is the planet that relates to electrics. The garage could not find any problems when I asked them to check it out, but the

voice went from soprano to bass in a week, and this butch woman kept telling me I was running out of petrol.

On one occasion I really should have paid closer attention to my own predictions. While reversing my VW Golf on a building site I ran over some planks, which gave way. I ended up at a 90-degree angle, looking at the sky from the bottom of a sewerage ditch.

A friend said: "Read your column in the TV Times." Un-



der my star it said: "Watch out for hidden obstacles."

Russell Grant is presenting 'House Busters' from 19 January at 8.30pm on Channel 5. He was talking to James Ruppert.

مكتبة الامم

11/PROPERTY

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998

AT HOME

For an utterly wicker experience ...

Until recently, willow baskets were as fashionable as lace-up shoes and bikes with mudguards. Now, as Rosalind Russell writes, you cannot open a glossy home magazine without seeing them and other willow containers squatting in kitchen units, in place of drawers, or lined up along shelves tagged with luggage labels listing the contents.

Stylists, who obviously do not have bulging cupboards and crammed drawers in their own homes, declare wicker is the way forward for storage. Bad luck for those who hoard bundles of three-year-old gas bills, but it is good news for a select bunch who may have felt left out on a limb in the scramble for high-tech living.

One of those stripping the willow is Susie Thomson, a basket weaver who admits the craft's image has been "desperate" ... until now.

"It has been very hard to get away from

the occupational therapy image," admits Ms Thomson, a recently elected Yeoman member of the Worshipful Company of Basket Makers. "Remember all those wooden trays everybody used to make?"

Ms Thomson, who grows and harvests six varieties of willow on a south London allotment, makes baskets destined for more up-market homes. She has had commissions from Egg, a Knightsbridge shop selling expensive clothes and home accessories, and from Marston and Langinger, which makes conservatories and furnishings for them.

A Susie Thomson shopping basket in the "strawberry" design, intended to follow the curves of your body while being carried, is likely to cost you £75.

"People don't expect to find a basket maker in Battersea," she acknowledges. The weaving is done in a workshop at the foot of her garden - unheated as the willow cannot be allowed to dry out. Harvesting the willow from the tennis court-sized allotment in Norbury must be done in winter when the sap is low, and the willow used within six weeks. Commercial willow strippers use machines, but

Ms Thomson does hers by hand. A wet spring such as last one encourages the willow to grow and her new crop was 8ft high when it was coppiced. When her own allotment does not yield enough willow, it can be bought in from growers in Somerset and Belgium.

A basket can take a day to weave, depending on the complexity. A pedlar basket - big enough to be regarded as a piece of furniture - can be used to store bed linen, towels or blankets and costs £180.

A traditional bride's basket, costing £90, takes around nine hours and makes an unusual wedding present. The design was inspired by a Bavarian tradition of giving a bride woven baskets to carry her dowry from her father's house to her new husband's house. "There would have been different kinds, from a white willow basket for clean laundry to others used for fruit and vegetables and they would have been carried in a procession, the number showing the status of the family," Ms Thomson says.

"Most people have a good understanding of other crafts like pottery but think of basket weavers as trolls sitting in

a cave, weaving away. I am quite passionate about putting style into it."

Commissions can take up to 16 weeks. Ms Thomson will be exhibiting at the Country Living Fair in London from 25 to 29 March.

There are, of course, also mass market baskets, which can be found quite easily.

Next Interiors offers a wicker storage box with side handle and hinged lid (62cm long, 38cm wide, 38cm deep) at £59.99, and a set of three shallow storage trays at £19.99. Lakeland sells willow shelf baskets, suitable for kitchen or bathroom storage, at £12.95 for two, and a willow basket trio - three sturdy baskets with wooden handles - for £16.95. The Pier's Milano sideboard houses three large wicker baskets instead of cupboards or drawers and costs £149. And Debenhams sells a square wicker chest, suitable for blankets, at £50 and bakers' baskets with handles on the sides from £10.

Susie Thomson 0171 223 4806; Next Interiors 0116 284 9434; Lakeland 015394 88100; The Pier 0171 637 7001; Debenhams enquiries 0171 408 4444.



Grown in the city: One of Susie Thomson's creations

When hunting a house, recruit a special agent

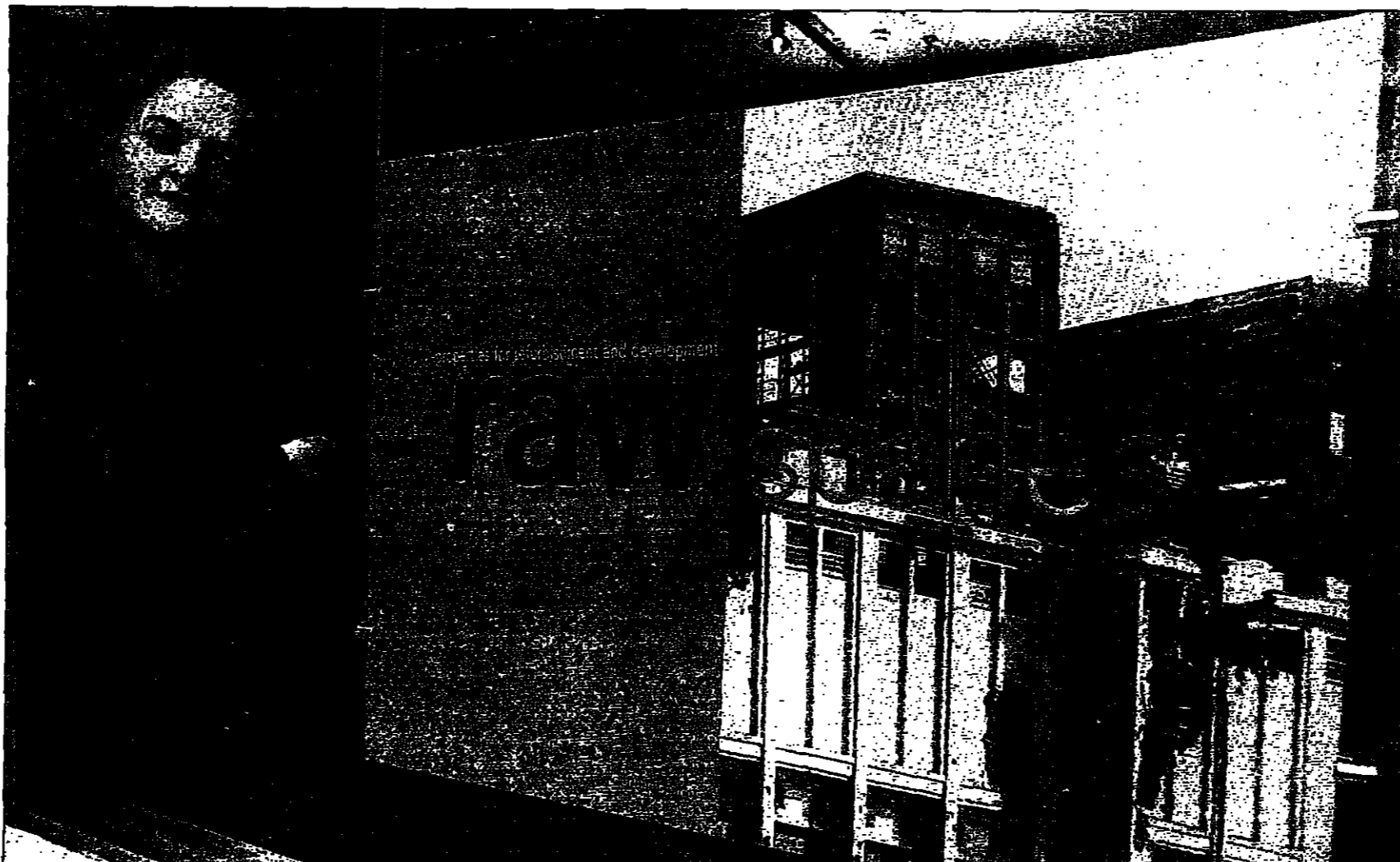
There are many ways of finding a property. One is to register with every estate agent in the area you want to live in - and risk receiving piles of dross in the mail. Another way is to define the kind of home you need and find the agent best suited to deliver it. Gineeta Vedrickas examines several potential house-hunting scenarios to discover who are the movers and shakers in that field.

Years ago a house-hunting mission led me to Hamptons' Dulwich branch in London. A helpful agent took my requirements: three bedrooms, garden and as near to the village as possible.

Then it came to the crunch question. How much would I like to spend? I muttered feebly, quickly adding £10,000 I could not afford, and it became clear that Hamptons and I were incompatible. Had I said pence rather than pounds? Feeling like someone looking for lard in Harrods, I shuffled off to a, shall we say, less sought-after area where agents did not pale at my paddy price range and have lived here ever since.

There is clearly an art to choosing the right agent. It is pointless registering with Savills, the serious end of the market, if you are after a bargain repossession.

Mary-Anne Crafter describes her company, Hamptons, as "middle to upper market". Currently on the books is a £5m home in Mill Hill, north London. It also has "good quality period cottages" for £150,000. Hamptons has no minimum price but would it market a cheap and nasty home? "If we believed we could do it justice," Ms Crafter says. Weary home-hunters, on any budget,



Merope Nelson: "Our clients are not interested in exteriors" Photograph: Rui Xavier

could do worse than access a central database which holds thousands of property details. Director Hilary Wade says Winkworth is London's largest agent: "We have offices from Suretham to Knightsbridge and can send a tailor-made list matching your financial specification and location."

Price range is not everything. Strutt & Parker, Knight Frank, and Aylesford may dominate established, wealthy areas such as Chelsea and Belgravia in London. But the fiber-chic are turning elsewhere in pursuit of "space" in the emerging residential areas on the City's edges.

Manhattan Lofts is a prime mover in the push to change industrial space into home.

Pioneers of the now-deeply trendy Clerkenwell, over half of its apartments in N1's The Factory (a reference to Mr Warhol) have sold and many to "bankers and lawyers".

Surely Andy didn't approve of day jobs? Joe Wharf, a canal-side development is being marketed by Pilcher Hershman and its site, "Gateway to Europe" - King's Cross to you and I - is ripe for development as aspirational properties replace the area's more notorious industry.

A friend viewed a canal-side apartment but found "it smelled like the Ganges" and that was in December. Development is not the only thing which should be ripe by next summer.

Shell-seekers can choose from an abundance of agents jostling for position in their quest to sell the next important space. A company's name often divulges its market which is why you will not find terrace houses on offer at Clerkenwell's Urban Spaces.

"We don't have washing lines full of details," says Merope Nelson, negotiator. "Our market is non-traditional so we're re-defining how we sell. Our clients want to know about light and square footage, they're not interested in exteriors and often don't mind where they live as long as the space is right."

Urban Spaces' windows have concepts rather than property details. Space is de-

fined as "living, work, raw or shell" for the benefit of creative clients, designers and photographers, who want large living and working areas which they can style themselves. Lettings form a considerable slice of its market and because spaces can be idiosyncratic Merope looks for clients "who appreciate designer German door-knobs".

Who will find that cosy retirement bungalow by the sea when you can no longer manage the urban loft's stairs? Fort Knox of Frinton, which could be named after its clients' love of security, operates through word of mouth rather than advertising. "In Frinton, if they know you they'll come to

you," says Shauna Heal, a negotiator.

Other local agents rely on recommendation. "Elderly people don't like things like Internet, they haven't even got computers," says Gordon Suckling, whose company has been selling retirement homes for more than 25 years. Seventy per cent of his clients are elderly and are looking for large bungalows.

Why Frinton? "They've been coming here on holiday all their lives," Mr Suckling says. "It's their ambition to retire here for peace and quiet. People don't want to be pestered and you can't even buy an ice cream on the beach - it's virtually an island." He becomes guarded as he remembers a previous scandal to hit town: "That hoo-ha about [the council] banning the fish and chip shop, some newspaper chap had a bee in his bonnet about Frinton."

Renee Everett first used Gordon Suckling's services 28 years ago and has bought and sold through his company ever since. She has travelled but prefers Frinton. "It's my favourite place. When I'm away I can't get back fast enough."

When her husband became seriously ill they decided to sell their large house and buy a flat there. "Gordon did everything he could to make life easier for us," she says. Mrs Everett, whose husband later died feels settled in her flat and relieved to live in a community where the local agent plays a strong part. Frinton may move at a slower pace but what it lacks in technological advancement it makes up for with personal service.

Hamptons: 0171 8348822; Savills: 0171 7300822; Winkworth: 0171 7371117; Strutt & Parker: 0171 629 7282; Knight Frank: 0171 629 8171; Aylesford: 0171 351 2383; Manhattan Lofts: 0171 631 1888; Pilcher Hershman: 0171 486 5256; Urban Spaces: 0171 251 4000; Fort Knox: 01255 674099; Gordon Suckling: 01255 851185.

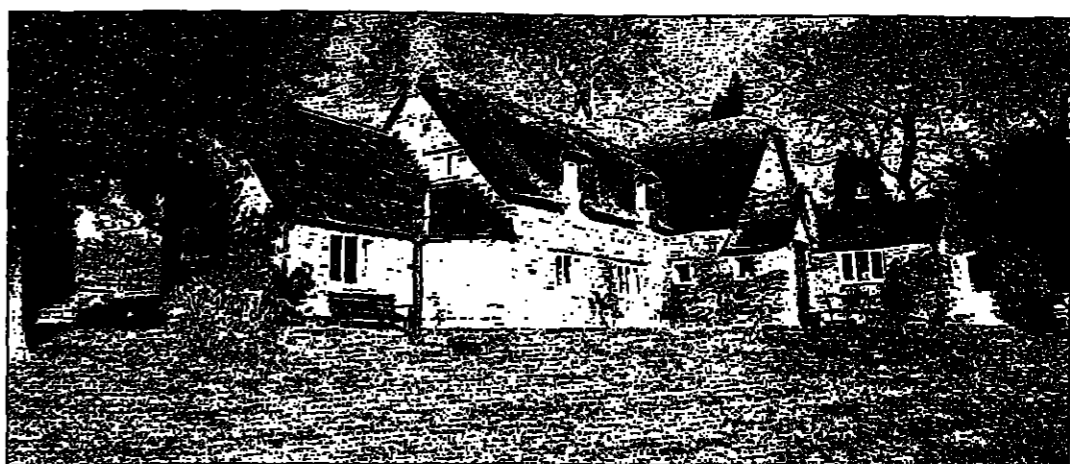
THREE TO VIEW WITH FAMOUS NEIGHBOURS

Number 23 St James's Gardens, in Holland Park, London W11, left, is an impressive Victorian house with impressive, but younger, neighbours who include Elton John, Jeremy Paxman, Richard Branson and Peter Hobday. The four-storey, three-bedroom house has a double reception room with 11ft ceiling height and two marble fireplaces. The lower ground floor dining room has double doors leading to an illuminated terrace and private garden designed by Penelope Hobhouse, of *Gardener* magazine. It is for sale through John Wilcox & Co for £1.45m (0171 602 2352).

Manton Weir Stables in Manton, Wiltshire, above right, is just down the road from the well known flat trainer Peter Chapple-Hyam, who runs a string of famous race horses, including many owned by Robert Sangster. Manton

Weir Stables was converted into a four-bedroom house seven years ago. The exposed timbers and beams were retained, but there is now a dining hall, sitting room, study and two bathrooms. Agents Egerton is asking for around £300,000 (0171 493 0676).

Vera Low's Cottage, right, is a 17th century thatched cottage with views across part of the Althorp Estate in Northamptonshire, ancestral home of Charles Althorp and the resting place of Diana, Princess of Wales. The restored five-bedroom house on the edge of Upper Harleston has an 18ft kitchen with Aga, drawing room with inglenook fireplace, a large study and double garage. It is named after a former occupant whose husband was a gardener on the Althorp estate. Agents Bidwells is asking £290,000 (01604 605050).



Thatchers answer the burning question



Thatched houses on the market include the White House in Alrewas, Staffordshire, above, parts of which are believed to be 400 years old. It is priced at £120,000 and offered through Bill Tandy and Company (01543 419400).

The Old Came Rectory, in Came, Dorset, below, a Grade II listed five-bedroom house with coach house and 1.66



Thatched cottages may look as pretty as a picture with their heavy laden eyebrows, roses around the door and pheasant standing aloof on the apex of the roof, but many purchasers shy away from thatch because of its perceived fire risk and insurance cost. Yet, as Mary Wilson writes, such factors need no longer be an issue.

Sue Millward, who is selling The Green Cottage, a four-bedroom thatched property in Withington, Hereford, had it re-thatched about seven years ago. "The old thatch was 3ft deep and had been patched over many times over the last 30 years," she says. "We had it taken right off as we were putting on an extension to the house and wanted to check the eaves were sound."

She had the thatch done in Norfolk Reed, which cost her around £12,000. If she had chosen straw it would have cost around £7,000. There are three basic types of thatch - long straw, which lasts around 20-25 years, winter wheat which has a life of 25-35 years and water reed, with a longevity of up to 70 years. As there are few thatches in Hereford, Mrs Millward was able to choose which one she wanted, but often the planners will dictate which type of thatch is permitted.

There are around 600 full-time thatchers in Great Britain, but in some areas finding one can be tricky. Mrs Millward had quite a problem because of the lack of thatch in her area. "We looked in the Yellow Pages and checked out the work of three thatchers, but we were slightly in the dark as to how good or not they were - who knows what a really good thatch looks like? We eventually found one we liked, who lived just outside Worcestershire."

Apart from the difference in the quotes, where they lived also had quite a bearing. Thatching a property from scratch can take up to 12 weeks and if the thatcher cannot travel to the property daily, he will have to be put up somewhere.

Mrs Millward says living in a thatched cottage is just like being in a house with a tea-cosy on it. "We had birds peeping around the corner in the morning," she says. "Blue tits, swallows and sparrows would nest in the thatch, but sometimes it did sound like a herd of elephants above our heads. But the thatch kept the house cool in the



Old for new: putting on the roof at the development in Abbots Ripton

summer and warm in the winter.

When Mrs Millward lived in the house, she had it insured by a high street insurer who hiked the premiums because of the thatch. But when she started letting it, she

went to a specialist holiday insurer who was not concerned with the type of roof, so her insurance went down. (Arkwright Owens in association with Humbers is selling the four-bedroom cottage for £175,000.)

Though many insurers will not even consider a thatched house, modern fire retardants reduce the likelihood of a thatch catching alight and a thatched house, if it is in a high-risk area, can be cheaper to insure than a traditional tiled house.

There are a number of specialist insurers. Some take the value of the house rather than the postal area it is in, which makes it cheaper and it is worth shopping around. Country Insurance Services, for example, is more concerned with the state of the thatch and how well it has been maintained than where the property is.

Even house-builders are constructing houses with thatched roofs. Berkeley Homes has built three in Hampshire and in the unspoilt village of Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon. County Homes by Ambrosden Court has finished one development and is building another where half the houses are thatched.

Thatching takes about three times longer to build than a tiled home and puts on an extra £10 per square foot to the asking price. The remaining thatched houses at Dove House Wood are available for £339,500 and £354,500.

To protect the thatch, a fire-retardant spray can be used on both the outside and inside - costing around £7.95 a square metre - and with a new house, or if starting from scratch, a flameproof foil barrier can be put between the rafters. That prevents a fire on the outside getting into the house, or vice versa if it starts inside and costs about 10-15 per cent of the total cost of the thatch.

Most thatch fires are chimney related and a special extinguisher is now available which can be installed right in the chimney. The next most usual cause is electrical faults, with sparks from a bonfire in the garden coming way down the list.

The Thatchers' Advisory Service, which has 27 thatchers working for it around the country and which thatched the Globe Theatre in London, will give advice, free, to anyone on any aspect of thatching and offers insurance policies. For the Globe, it dipped every bundle of Norfolk Reed in fire-retardant before it was put on, which is another, more expensive, way of protecting it.

County Homes by Ambrosden Court, 01869 241481; Arkwright Owens, 01432 267213; Thatchers' Advisory Service, 01256 880828 or ask for FreePhone Thatch; Country Insurance Services, 0345 660063.

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